

Novelette by Eleanor Hoyt Brainerd

OCT. 1913
15 CENTS

AINSLEE'S

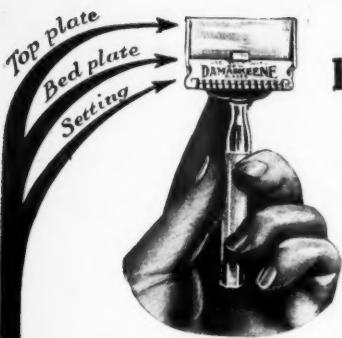
THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS



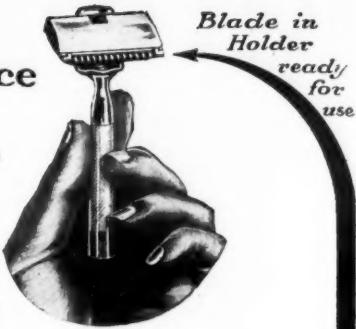
Frederick Alexander Duncan

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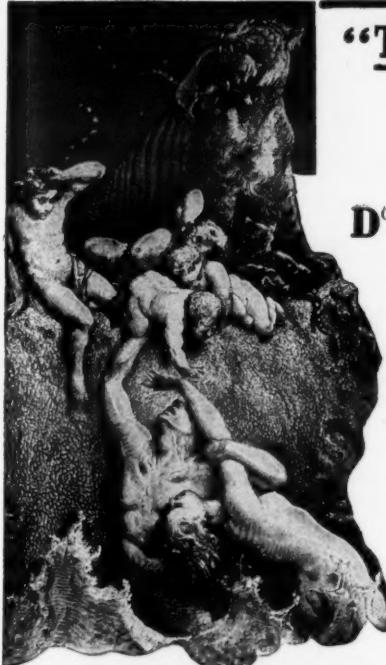
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THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

Vol. XXXII. No. 3

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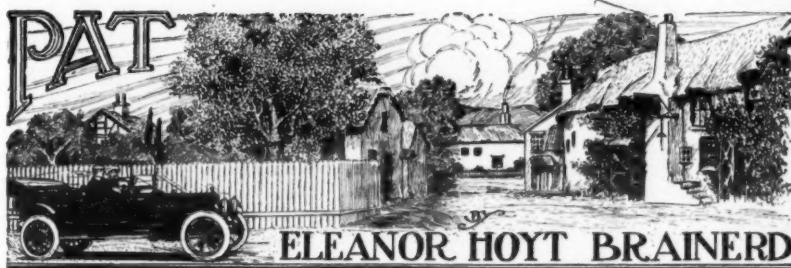
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AINSLEE'S

VOL. XXXII.

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No. 3.



T'S the most annoying thing imaginable!"

Mrs. Eustis looked as if she meant it. Her carefully massaged face had lapsed into lines consistent with her years and her predicament, but foreign to her principles and her practice; and she pinned on her hat absent-mindedly, carelessly, as if the act were a mere incident and not, as usual, a sacred function.

"You should try imagining six annoying things every morning before breakfast, Aunt Dee," advised the blithe young person curled up on the window seat. "You'd work up, in time, to something much worse than this."

"Don't be an idiot, Patricia. I hate even a cheerful idiot," snapped the young person's aunt. She was in no mood for feeble attempts at humor. Her carefully arranged plans had been completely upset. For a woman with a widespread reputation as "a wonderful manager," that, in itself, was a distressful thing; but, when she took into consideration the cause and the result of the upsetting, the incident took on the aspect of a calamity.

The Dowager Mrs. Eustis was ill at Wiesbaden; and, while the Dowager

Mrs. Eustis was not the object of her American daughter-in-law's fondest affection, she was an exceedingly important old lady, socially and financially, and could not be neglected. She had sent for her son's wife, and her son's wife would take the first train for Wiesbaden.

Major Eustis, the son, was in India, and his interests were in his wife's hands. For that matter, even when he had been in England, his interests had been in his wife's hands; and the hands were competent and trustworthy, quite capable of holding their own against the grasping and masterful hands of the major's elder brother.

"I wonder whether she has sent for Algernon," mused Mrs. Eustis, wrestling with a veil that insisted upon drawing too tightly across the nose and not tightly enough under the chin.

"Fancy sending for an Algernon in an emergency!" murmured the girl on the window seat.

"He's very clever." Mrs. Eustis was always willing to give the devil his due. "Much more clever than your Uncle Jim, and he wants everything he can get; but, luckily, Madam Eustis doesn't like his wife—silly woman named Lucy,

all pale-blue eyes and shoulder blades and humility. The dowager does everything but jump up and down on her, and then despises Algernon because he hasn't the manliness to stand up for the wife of his choice, even if he was a poor chooser."

"Pleasant old party, the dowager!" commented Patricia.

"My dear, she's a tartar, a selfish old tyrant and bully! But, do you know, I quite like her? She's so frankly disagreeable that one always knows where to find her, and she has brains and force and wit. We get on famously. Not that we agree on many things. Bless you, no! That would be no way to get on with the dowager. We disagree flatly, and she knows that I don't care tuppence what she thinks about me or says to me, so she doesn't bother to row with me.

"I'm the only one in the family who isn't afraid of her and who treats her for what she is—a clever old lady with an ugly disposition. So I don't bore her. That's why she sends for me when she is ill or when she is desperately tired of the people around her. I don't know which it is this time, but I have to go—and isn't it a mess?"

"Hard luck," agreed the young person. "You're sure it will be all right for me to go down to Chelmy alone?"

"What else is to be done, child? You can't go with me. The dowager would froth at the mouth if I were to take you along. And, with the servants all gone and the house given up, you can't stay here, and you couldn't stay at a hotel alone. Then, besides, you ought not to miss Chelmy. An invitation there means such a lot. I worked myself almost to death on charitable committees and bazaars and things with Lady Chelmy before she invited me. It took me four years to get that invitation, and the visit was the dreariest, most slate-gray experience I ever had; but the thing paid."

"Let me go to a sanitarium, or an orphan asylum, or a retreat for idiots, or some other homy, cheerful place like that, while you are away, Aunt Dee!"

"Nonsense! Chelmy is one of the

show places of England, and all of the biggest people go there. But I'll admit that it isn't often gay. Lady Chelmy goes in for important guests, without any regard for their being amusing. Still, sometimes an important person *is* amusing. Accidents will happen. I met an ambassador down there one autumn who was quite the most improper and delightful man imaginable. And then even the stodgiest personage may have an amusing wife or husband."

"It's a long chance," sighed Patricia.

"Cheer up, Pat. It's educational. They will be nice to you. Lady Chelmy sent a most cordial answer to my note. She's going to be a mother to you. I can't quite see you with an English mother, but do be discreet, child! You have plenty of tact and sense, and you've been wonderful, during your month here in London. But you'll have to be even more careful when I am not around to smooth things over. Girls haven't the freedom here that they have at home; and, even for England, Lady Chelmy's notions about the proprieties are frightfully antiquated. I almost wish you were going to one of the faster set."

"Amen!"

"But you aren't. I wish I could leave Barnes with you. She would be a help; but I'll need her. She doesn't mind the dowager. I couldn't find any one for you at such short notice; but Lady Chelmy said she could have some one for you. What is it, Barnes?"

"The cab's here, Mrs. Eustis, and the luggage is on."

"What! Already? This is really dreadful, Pat! If the old lady isn't ill, I shall feel like murdering her. I don't believe there's a thing the matter with her. Probably I shall be back by the end of the week. You're sure you understand about your train? Call a cab early. You mustn't miss that train. There isn't another that will get you there before dinner, and it's the unpardonable sin, at Chelmy, to upset dinner-table arrangements. You'd never live that down. Yes, Barnes, I'm coming. I'll telegraph you as soon as I see how things are, Pat. Remember

what I told you about tips, if I can't join you. Be good, child. Don't be too aggressively American."

The admonitions came back across her shoulder as she hurried to the door, her niece following.

"Don't wear your cerise frock, Pat. It's much too French for Chelmy." She was going down the steps.

"And, Pat"—she had reached the curb, and turned for a final volley—"don't flirt! You really mustn't flirt—not at Chelmy. The 'unco guid' are always scandalmongers, and you would get into trouble. It would make things awfully unpleasant for you—and for me, too. Please, Pat!"

The cab door closed behind her. The four-wheeler rolled away, and Patricia Herford went back to her window seat, with virtuous resolutions seething within her.

She would be so good that, beside her, the personages at Chelmy would seem frivolous, wanton. She would wear white muslin, externally and internally. She would efface herself and let her conversation be yea, yea, and nay, nay. As for men, she would not look at one of the creatures a second time. Probably one look would be quite enough to satisfy her, if the party proved to be all that her aunt had pictured it.

Curled up among the chintz-covered cushions, she looked lazily across the street to the sunlit spaces and tree-flung shadows of Regent's Park, and mentally performed social five-finger exercises in the key of baby blue, her long lashes drooping lower and lower, until at last they altogether hid the dark eyes.

Sleeping there, against a gay background of pictured hollyhocks and fox-gloves, she was not an offensive sight, even from a British viewpoint. To be sure, her nose tip-tilted saucily, even in sleep; but her lips, instead of curling upward at the corners, as they were wont to do in waking hours, had taken on a pathetic, babyish droop that would have done credit to any white muslin and blue ribbons; and neither dimples nor eyes were awake to contradict the childish wistfulness. For that matter, even when awake, very wide awake, Pat

had always had her moments of soft helplessness, of pathetic appeal. Her Brother Tom, with a brother's frank brutality, had once warned a friend that when Pat smiled a fellow would do well to take a hitch in his belt and hit the trail leading from trouble; but that when she looked pathetic, it was usually too late to do more than set one's back to the wall and resolve to make a good finish.

"What on earth men see in her, I can't for the life of me tell!" the brother of the charmer had acknowledged. "She's a good sort, all right; but nothing to go dotty over. I can't dope it out; but when it comes to men, sensible-appearing men, too, Pat's a pest. I get a crowd of fine fellows together here on the ranch, and we are having a bully time; and then along comes Pat, and one man after another develops Patrophobia and loses his interest in hunting and fishing and broncho-busting. Then they all get sore on one another, and everything's uncomfortable; and, one by one, the men have telegrams calling them home suddenly. It's enough to make a chap ashamed of his sex. And Pat only looks innocent and pained when I row at her, and says she can't help it if men are foolish things. Now, take my warning, old man, and don't make a silly ass of yourself over Pat."

The enlightened friend had lasted just two weeks. Then an unexpected telegram had called him back to Chicago.

At ten minutes past two, Patricia wakened, looked at her watch, and gave a little gasp of dismay. Only twenty minutes before train time! She could never make it—but she must! Aunt Dee had said that there was no other afternoon train, and the dinner hour was the first commandment. Oh, she must take that train! To have slept two whole hours! Idiotic! But the house was so still. No one could have kept awake in such a sleeping-princess sort of silence. If only a proper prince had awakened her—in time for the train!

She scrambled into her traveling coat and hat, seized her dressing case, hur-

ried downstairs, and whistled for a cab. No answering roll of wheels made it self heard. She whistled again. Still no cab. Train time was approaching by leaps and bounds. Patricia looked desperately up and down the street, and started in hot haste toward the nearest cab stand, reaching it only to find that, as she had feared, there was not a cab in line. Breathless, flushed, half tearful, she ran on toward a taxicab stand several streets away. If only she could get a taxi! No hansom or four-wheeler could do the trick now.

Not a taxicab at the stand! The tears welled up and overflowed. No hope. She had spoiled everything. Aunt Dee would be furious, and Lady Chelmy would be prejudiced against her from the start.

Suddenly a light flashed through the mist in her eyes. Down the street, in the shade thrown by a great tree that grew just inside the park fence, stood a motor car; and beside it was a man tinkering with its internal organs. Both the car and the man presented stolid backs to Patricia's gaze; but the backs were eloquent. The car was a smart-looking gray roadster. The man was evidently young, well set up, correct in point of cap and coat. A private car, of course, and probably the owner; but desperate situations demand desperate expedients; and, after all, a man was only a man, while Lady Chelmy—

"Will you drive me to Charing Cross Station, please? I'm very late for my train; so it will be necessary to hurry," said Pat, with a matter-of-course crispness that held no trace of doubt about the car's position as a public carrier.

The young man straightened up with a jerk, turned an amazed and wrathful face toward Miss Herford, looked, wavered visibly, melted, suppressed a grin, stiffened into formal politeness, and touched his cap automatically and respectfully as if he had been born to servitude.

"When does your train leave?" he asked, as he assisted his fare to climb into the car.

"At two-thirty."

The man checked a whistle at its

birth, cranked, and sprang into the driver's seat.

"It will be a close thing, if we make it at all," he said, as he sent the car whizzing stationward.

After that, he was too busy for conversation. There seemed to be even more fat women and futile old men and small children than usual wandering about the middle of the street; but the roadster dodged them all, slowed down for an occasional policeman, crept cleverly through narrow, open channels in the traffic, while Patricia held her breath and her dressing case and sent up a prayer to the gods of chance.

Once the driver looked at her—only once. He seemed to find a measure of enjoyment in doing it, but the fluently profane driver of a coal truck distracted his attention, and Patricia was free to return to her study of his profile.

It was a most satisfactory profile. Almost she could have wished that this ram in her thicket were a personage and had been encountered at Chelmy. He looked rather like a personage, or, at least, he looked as a personage ought to look—tall and broad-shouldered, clean-lipped, clear-eyed, strong of chin, browned by the sun; an admirable explorer, or V. C. hero, or rising young statesman.

But eligibles had a way of looking like personages. Pat had already discovered that depressing fact, with its correlative—that real personages had a way of being stout and bald and short of breath, or lean and sallow and dyspeptic. She sighed as she reflected on the mysterious ways of Providence; and, catching the sigh, the man looked at her again.

"You are anxious about your train?" he inquired.

"Terribly!"

There was no use in explaining that regret, not anxiety, had set her sighing.

"A later train?" he suggested.

"There isn't one early enough."

He was still looking down at her; and so friendly were the blue eyes, so encouraging was the firm chin, that Pat was moved to tell him all about everything, about Aunt Dee, and the down-

ger, and Lady Chelmy, and the dinner hour, and the nap that had upset all her plans—but she did not. Even at her maddest, she had lucid intervals. It was always during such intervals that she suffered pangs of conscience, and the twinges were coming on now. She was blushing hotly, and felt a trifle tremulous. Of course, he seemed quite a nice person; but he might not have been. He might not be even now.

The car whirled around a corner on two wheels, and Pat, clinging to the arm of the leather-cushioned seat, had a mental vision of flaring newspaper headlines: "Shocking motor accident; Miss Patricia Herford, niece of Mrs. James Eustis, and—" Who? Perhaps he was notorious, a disreputable character. The lump in her throat grew larger and harder. What would Aunt Dee believe about her, when she read those headlines? What would Tom believe about her? Motoring with a notoriously disreputable character whom she wasn't supposed to know, when she had promised faithfully to take the afternoon train for Chelmy! She would be dead and couldn't explain, and no one would understand that she had been trying to keep her promise, and that the motor and the man were purely incidental. So unjust, so heartless seemed the lurid newspaper account of the tragedy that Pat could have wept over her own imaginary obituary; but the notorious character created a diversion by swooping suddenly down a side street, cutting circles around a moving van, dashing through an alleyway, and bringing up in front of Charing Cross Station.

"You'll have to run for it," he said. "Sorry. Here, porter! Lady's making the two-thirty. Look alive, now!"

Patricia threw him a "thank you," and darted off in the wake of the porter, who was looking extraordinarily alive. It was not until she was midway of a stirring dash trainward that she realized that she had not even offered to pay for her ride.

"What's the use?" she said to herself helplessly. "He wouldn't have taken it, and I shall never see him again."

The porter came to a full stop in his headlong career, and mopped his face.

"No use, miss. She's gone."

"Gone?"

"Just hoff, miss. No fault o' mine. You 'adn't the time. 'Arf a minute more, and we'd 'a' done it."

Patricia pulled herself together.

"Yes, thank you. You did all you could. Now, if you will carry my bag back for me, and find me a cab—"

She retraced her steps slowly, laggingly. A cab, of course. That was the first thing. But what next? Where should she tell the cabman to go? To a hotel—naturally. It was perfectly silly that a woman twenty years old shouldn't stay at a hotel without a chaperon or a maid—or a trunk. She had no patience with such foolishness; but Aunt Dee felt so strongly about it, and Lady Chelmy would disapprove terribly. She must send a telegram to Lady Chelmy, saying that she would be down in the morning—but it would be horrible to go into a cold-storage plant of English disapproval. Chelmy had promised coldly enough at best; and now—

"You did miss it?" said a voice at her shoulder.

There was the notorious character, cap in hand, profound concern on his lips, but something different—though too closely veiled for definite appraisal—in his eyes.

"Isn't it dreadful?" said Pat dismally. It was such a comfort to see some one she knew that she managed a wan little smile, even in her gloom.

"It's a beastly shame!" admitted the man sympathetically. "I'm so sorry about it, but I was afraid it would turn out that way. We made a good try for it, though. Was it really very important that you should go down this afternoon?"

"Oh, terribly important!" The words came in a subdued wail.

"And you are sure that there isn't another train before evening?"

"Not to Paddesford."

"Paddesford?"

The echo came on a note of sharp surprise.

"Yes; Paddesford is the nearest station for Chelmy."

"You were going to Chelmy?"

She nodded. A vision of the Chelmy carriage waiting at the Paddesford station, and of Lady Chelmy waiting in ancestral halls overwhelmed her. The veil had swung away from the man's eyes, though the polite concern was struggling hard to maintain its place on his lips.

"But Paddesford!" he murmured incredulously.

The look in his eyes brightened from gladness to audacity.

"It's jolly queer, you know," he said, in a pleasant, casual way, as he might have spoken of the weather, "but I'm motoring through Paddesford this afternoon, on my way home. Now, if you would allow me to run you down to Chelmy——"

The month of London, overlying twenty years of Wyoming and Chicago, brought forth a quick protest. Miss Herford stiffened visibly. Her chin went upward a fraction of an inch. There was freezing rebuke in the eyes that she turned upon the author of the egregious proposal.

"Of course, that is quite impossible," she said, with a crisp severity that would have done credit to the most British of maidens. But, unfortunately, she did look at the offender. How else could the freezing rebuke have been effectively delivered? And when the rebuke in her eyes met the gay challenge in his, Wyoming stirred under the London veneer. He did not look disreputable, and he did look a dear—a blithe, boyish dear—under the manliness of him. Such a pleasant manner and such a nice mouth!

"We could make it easily by six o'clock, even allowing for a blow-out or two," the man urged softly.

They could make it by six o'clock. The day would be saved. Lady Chelmy's wrath would be averted. Aunt Dee's hard-won Chelmy footing would not be endangered. Patricia looked toward the waiting car.

"It's quite all right, you know." He had a most agreeable voice. "I'll take

you around and get your American ambassador to vouch for me, if you say the word."

He was smiling now, and she liked his smile. Out in Wyoming, a man with a smile like that would not need to be tagged by an ambassador. Miss Patricia Herford shook off London prejudices, and, figuratively speaking, went back to the blanket.

"It would be awfully kind of you," she said sweetly. "If you are sure it won't take you out of your way?"

"Not a mile," vowed the man.

"I'd be in such hopeless disgrace if I did not get there before dinner tonight."

"Look upon me as a special Providence."

Once more he tucked her into his car. Once more he climbed in beside her, and they went stealing in and out through the traffic; but this time he was driving slowly, and their progress was less dramatic. The phantom headlines that had earlier convicted Pat of folly did not rise again before the eyes of her conscience. They were dead, with yesterday's news; and the reprehensible young woman, having burned her bridges behind her, faced her adventure with a lift of spirit. After all, one knew a nice man when one saw him, and she was not pledged to support the British constitution, and it was a heavenly day for motoring.

The man, eying her cautiously, took courage.

"It will be a rippin' fine run, after we get out of this," he hazarded.

"Yes," admitted Pat, as happily as if she had been an altogether proper young person; but she did not pick up the conversational ball. Presently the man made another attempt.

"I've made the trip often, this summer; but I don't tire of it. You see, I've been in Africa for several years, and, after that, this English country—well, I like it! My people live down in Kent. Pretty bit of country about there. My name's Lyttleton."

He did not make the announcement impressively, but he looked rather as if he expected it to be illuminating. Pat's

face showed no sign of interest in his name. She had followed him no farther than Africa, and there she had lingered.

"I want to see Africa," she said eagerly.

"Don't!"

"Why not?"

"It's a brute of a country, and the brutishness gets hold of you, some way or other. Things come up out of the dark at you even after you get away."

"But isn't it Garden of Allah-ish?"

"Oh, yes; and Streets of Cairo-ish, I suppose, if you're doing Africa on Cook's tickets. But Biskra's one thing and Matabeleland is another. You have to do more than scratch the skin of Africa in order to get down to the vitals; but, when you do reach the raw — Let's not spoil an English July with travelogs about hell!"

"Talking about it makes you look frightfully English." Patricia studied his face with frank interest. "There's a type of Englishman that looks like a well-groomed, cheerful, soccer-playing, toffee-loving Eton boy most of the time, and then suddenly tightens up into a cool-eyed, set-jawed, 'England-expects-every-man-to-do-his-duty' sort of person."

"Well, England does, you know," said the man.

He was on the fence, now, between the Etonian and the heroic. No man of twenty-eight wants to be convicted of taking himself or his country seriously.

"Yes, I suppose so," Pat agreed; "just as the Lord expects a good deal of England, and Aunt Dee expects me to behave properly. There's considerable disappointment all along the scale, I fancy."

She sighed despondently, and the man laughed.

"Is the sigh for England, or for humanity, or for personal depravity?" he asked, with a grim purely Etonian.

"Conviction of sin."

She was half serious. Aunt Dee had expected her to do her duty; and motoring with a perfectly strange man from Darkest Africa could not, by any

stretch of the imagination, be construed as a duty.

"It is desperately important that I should be at Chelmlny before dinner time," she urged.

The man apparently filled in the gap 'twixt conviction of sin and the importance of being at Chelmlny in time for dinner.

"And why not be there, when it's only a matter of accepting a lift from a fellow human?" he asked lightly. "Come, now, where's the sin? I'm not a bounder, and I flatter myself that I don't look like one. It is perfectly true that I live down beyond Chelmlny, and was going to motor home this afternoon. Chance threw us together, and offered you a way out of your difficulty and me an agreeable afternoon. It would have been sheer silliness to have chucked the proposition back at Providence."

"But Aunt Dee——" began Pat.

She was feeling very miserable once more. The headlines were looming up again. It was all right for the man to talk. Any man would talk that way, under the circumstances, but lots of people had told her how Englishmen felt about unconventional American girls, even though financial stringency did lead some of them to marry the creatures. If this man wasn't nice, it was horrid for her to be with him; and, if he was nice, then he was having a lark with her, but despising her and thanking Heaven that his sisters were different from her.

"I don't know your aunt," admitted the man; "but, if she belongs over here, I'm sure I could square her. We are morally certain to know some of the same people. I'm a decent sort, you know. Truly I am."

Patricia still looked so utterly woe-begone that he racked his brain for more encouraging things to say to her.

"You're as safe as if you were with your own brother."

The mention of her brother was too much for Pat. Two large tears rose in her eyes, clung for a moment to her lashes, and then rolled deliberately down her flushed cheeks. If only Tom

had been in London instead of in Wyoming, she would never have been in such a scrape as this. She was homesick for Tom.

"Oh, I say!" protested the man. "You mustn't feel like that. Really you mustn't. It's quite all right. 'Pon honor it is. Why, chaperoning is a lost art, here in England. We are going America one better in that line. I'm as sober and respectable as a family butler, and I'm engaged to a rippin' fine girl, and she wouldn't worry over doing what you're doing. Not for a minute! She'd take it like a gate or a ditch. And I'd be willing for her to do it, too. 'Pon honor I would! She's such a nice, sensible sort. You'd like her."

Having invented a fiancée for himself, he was growing positively enthusiastic about her.

Pat was visibly cheering up. Compared with Africa, even America might seem soaked in conventions; and, if he was engaged— An engaged young man who was willing to talk about his engagement to a girl who had no other way of knowing about it seemed safe as the Rock of Gibraltar. If he had intended to go even so far as flirting, he wouldn't have told about being engaged.

"Is she pretty?"

Curiosity had distracted Pat's attention from her own transgressions; and, along with the curiosity, went something that was oddly like regret. It did seem as if all the nicest men were either engaged or married.

"Stunning!" asserted the man loyally.

"Really stunning, or just lovely—English fashion?"

The man hesitated a minute. When one was making a fiancée to order, one might as well have her exactly right.

"Well," he said, at last, "she's not exactly stunning, if big and Junoesque is what you mean by stunning. She's about your height, and slender, and she has brown eyes and brown hair, with all sorts of little warm lights in it."

Just here he woke and forcibly with-

drew his gaze from the girl at his side and his tongue from description of her.

"She has an aquiline nose," he said firmly.

Not that he liked aquiline noses, but that he must radically change the portrait that he had started to draw.

"Lucky girl!" said Pat. "I do loathe a pug nose."

"Oh, I don't know," protested the man politely. "She is awfully fair."

"With brown eyes and hair?"

Pat was surprised, almost unbelieving.

"Yes; it's queer, but she is—clear, white skin, you know, with no color at all except in her lips."

As he spoke, he studied Pat's creamy skin, with its brownish shadows, and the soft, peachlike color of her cheeks, and the faintly splashed freckles across the impertinent, retroussé nose.

"Her hair is thick, but perfectly smooth and straight," he added. He was beginning to dislike this fiancée of his, but he had almost made a bad break, and must intrench himself securely from suspicion, if the girl to whom he was engaged was to be a comfort to the self-reproachful young American.

"What's her first name?" asked Pat.

To have asked the girl's surname would have been intrusive, but one couldn't identify people by first names, and she wanted to know what the man called that white-faced, brown-eyed, aquiline-nosed English girl.

The man did not answer promptly, and Pat colored rosily.

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" she stammered hastily. "Never mind. It doesn't matter."

But he had had time to search his family records.

"Her name's Alicia," he announced. If Alicia was good enough for his sister and his mother and his grandmother, it ought to do for his fiancée. The retroussé nose showed a momentary inclination to turn up even farther than nature had planned, but Pat checked its aspirations.

Alicia! It fitted the white skin and the aquiline nose, but not the brown

eyes and hair. An English Alicia would have pale-blue eyes and light hair, and never, no, never, under any pressure of circumstances, would she go motoring with a strange man. If the girl had been an Elizabeth, with possibilities of Betsy, or even a Mary, infolding a potential Molly—

"We call her 'Toots,'" said the man.

Toots saved the day. A Toots might be perfectly capable of a Pat's misdoings.

"I'm sure she's a dear," said Patricia, with a warm little rush of sympathy for a Toots nature handicapped by an aristocratic heritage.

"Yes, she is, rather," acknowledged the man, but without turbulent enthusiasm. How could a fellow throw fits over a pasty-faced girl with a Roman nose, even though one did violence to the eternal fitness of things and called her "Toots"?

Still, as time passed, he had occasion to feel deeply grateful to Alicia. (In thought, he rejected the "Toots" and called her "Alicia"; he even called her "the Honorable Alicia," and felt a growing conviction that she was several years older than he, and had a most unpleasant, domineering mother.) His inspiration in regard to her seemed justified by the results. The Honorable Alicia had cleared up the showy atmosphere as effectually as any thunderstorm. Evidently, through some mysterious, feminine psychology, the fact that he was engaged had set his companion's mind at rest, quieted her qualms of conscience; and when Patricia, with a clear conscience and a light heart, went about the business of enjoying a sunshiny, summer day, and a motor run, and an agreeable, if pre-empted, young man, her performance was vastly edifying.

She beamed, she dimpled, she laughed. She was whimsical, serious, confiding, boyishly frank, girlishly demure—and she was good to look at! Ye gods, how easy it was to look at her! There were moments when Lyttleton resented a sisterly note, an elder-sisterly note, one might call it; but that, he supposed, was one of the penalties

of being engaged to Alicia. Then, too, Pat was elder-sisterly only in spots, and at far intervals. Alicia, in the background, was reassuring, but easily overlooked, and the day was so wonderful, and the boy was such a nice boy!

Patricia did not flirt with him—she never flirted with engaged or married men—but, to the undiscriminating eye, Patricia's ordinary way with a man bore a certain marked resemblance to the finer shades of flirtation. It is one thing to blush and dimple at a man deliberately, and quite another thing to blush and dimple at a man spontaneously; but the man is likely to note only the blushes and the dimples, and to find them misleading, or at least disconcerting.

Lyttleton was not misled; for, in a fumbling way, he realized that he owed his entertainment to Alicia; but he was disconcerted. In fact, as the afternoon progressed, he acknowledged to himself that he was jolly well bowled over. This girl was unlike anything that he had ever encountered, either in England or in Africa. He was, so to speak, motoring without a road map. Possibly, out in Montana, all girls were like this one. If they were, small wonder that Britain's younger sons went in heavily for ranching in the States.

Now, Alicia—but Alicia did not count. She would not have been with him under such circumstances. And there was Gladys Ransome, of the Gentry—but Gladys did not count, either. She was a good sort, but quite another story. As for Mrs. Blessington, down in Johannesburg—he blotted her out of his thoughts promptly. She did not belong even in the same reflections on feminine psychology with this girl, who had some of the blithe inconstancy and frank unconventionality of a Gladys, and much of the assured poise and good breeding of an Alicia, and something in addition that was neither Alicia nor Gladys, but was altogether delectable.

Only a cad could misunderstand her comradeship; but he rather wished that he had not suggested her motoring

down to Chelmy with him. It was all right, in one way, but he knew exactly what the early-Victorian British matron would think of it—and the girl didn't. She would be likely to go up in the air, if he should warn her not to tell Lady Chelmy about him—would be furious with him for asking her to do something that he thought she should be ashamed of. But, if he didn't warn her, she might queer herself hopelessly with the Chelmy crowd. Why, even his own mother would— Oh, decidedly, he ought not to have invited her to motor down with him. But how was he to divine that hitherto unknown quantity—that frank, confiding, adorable something in between Alicia and Gladys? And, since she was what she was and he was what he was, why spoil a glorious summer afternoon with pangs of conscience and uncomfortable misgivings?

Having administered knock-out drops to his too active conscience, he gave himself up to enjoyment. This afternoon was his. To-morrows were on the knees of the gods.

Alicia, paler of face than ever, fled far into the background. Even Pat forgot her, forgot the necessity of an excuse for being happy in defiance of conventions. All the green world was fresh-washed by a night of summer rain, sun-thrilled, breeze-cooled, sweet-smelling, wonderful; but the man knew only that the sun flecked the girl's brown eyes with little golden lights, and that the vagrant wind played mad pranks with hair that had not been arranged for motoring, and that the rose pinned to the girl's coat was fragrant beyond the wont of roses, and that it was good to be alive and young.

As for Patricia, well, Patricia was having a thoroughly good time, the best time that she had had in England. She told the man all about Wyoming, and a little about Chicago, and considerable about England; and he seemed to enjoy the bits about England even more than the rapid-fire sketches of America.

"Only you mustn't treat the British lion like a toy terrier down at Chelmy, you know," he warned her. "My

word, but they take England seriously down there—Church and State, and House of Lords, and Royal Academy, and the whole business! If you must joke at Chelmy, you'd better have your little fling at the Pribiloff Islands, or something remote like that. Even then, you'd be likely to smash into diplomatic complications and the seal matter. On the whole, it would be safer not to joke at all at Chelmy."

Pat sighed.

"You know Lady Chelmy?" she asked.

"Yes."

"What's she like?"

He hesitated for a moment reflectively.

"Well, she's something like the Albert Monument, and something like Caesar's wife, and something like a rainy Sunday in London."

The girl's comment was half laugh, half groan.

"Will everybody be like that?"

"I'm afraid most of the personages will. Dunsmere may be there. He's Lord Chelmy's favorite nephew, but he won't come in for the title. He'll be there if Lady Mary Fenton is. I've heard that there's a possibility in that quarter, and that Lady Chelmy is willing to help the thing along."

"He won't count," said Pat virtuously. "Oh, she was going to be very, very good, after this one afternoon!"

About four o'clock, the car ran down the main street of X—and, turning a corner, stopped abruptly.

"Would you mind waiting here alone, a few moments, while I run around to the King's Arms and telephone?" asked Lyttleton. "I've just remembered something rather important, an engagement that I failed to keep. You'll be quiet here."

"Run along," Pat ordered. "It's a lovely, smug, Dickensy sort of a street. I'll enjoy getting acquainted with it."

When he came back, she had a chubby small boy and a chubbier small girl in the car with her, and was distributing sixpences.

"These," she said, by way of introduction, "are Jimmy and his sister, Ann

Maria. They have no sort of an opinion of personages. I asked them. They think I'd do much better with Helmston Fair. It begins here to-morrow, and I've half a mind to let the personages escape, and stay over with Jimmy and Maria. Their mother keeps lodgers in that nice house on the corner. There's going to be a giant and a sword swallower, and everybody gets 'screwed.' I've never seen everybody 'screwed.'

"There's some as ain't," admitted Jimmy, with a fine regard for accuracy.

"Never mind. A few sober ones couldn't spoil my good time. I really feel that I ought to stay over; but I'm expected somewhere else, you know. Maybe I'd better go on and do the best I can with the personages. I'm afraid there's no chance of their being 'screwed,' but you never can tell what will happen. I hope you'll give my regards to the giant and the sword swallower. Tell them that, if I hadn't had other plans that I couldn't very well change, I wouldn't have missed meeting them. I'm so glad the sixpences and I happened along just when you needed us. Good-by."

"G'-by!" chorused the two chubby ones, wide-eyed, uncomprehending, but rapturously clutching their money.

"Now, a man," quoth Pat, "could have stayed for the fair. I don't want a vote. What I want is liberty."

"A vote would be less explosive," said the man, half seriously.

She was so dear, this whimsical girl, who would never walk soberly in the neatly flagged paths of the Aicias, and, since he could not always walk the primrose path with her—"But why not?" something back in his brain—or was it in his heart?—asked unexpectedly, and left him gasping with the suddenness of the idea.

Why not? But he did not even know her name. He had never seen her before to-day. And then, the gasp giving way to a grin, there was Alicia!

Pat waited sympathetically for the joke, but he did not tell it.

Half an hour later, as they neared a

tiny village, cozily nestling in the hollow of a river's arm, Lyttleton checked the speed of the car until it crawled lazily along the white road, and looked doubtfully at the girl.

"We can easily make Chelmy from here in half an hour," he said, "and it's only half after four now. I wonder—there's a rather rippin' little garden back of the inn, here—along the river, it is, and there's a tea table under a big tree, and one goes down to it through a tangle of old-fashioned flowers. At least, that's the way it was a long time ago. I could do with some tea, couldn't you? It would be awfully jolly, and we've plenty of time; and I'd like you to see the garden."

He was humble, but boyishly eager. Pat looked at him in friendly fashion, and smiled, because his eyes begged so openly. He wanted her to see the garden. And she wanted to see it. Yes, she wanted very much to see it. An old garden along the river bank, and a tangle of old-fashioned flowers! It had an inviting sound. There would be the murmur of running water, and the hum of bees, and the warm sunshine, and the tea table in the shade—and currant bread and jam! And then there would be the man.

It had been a good afternoon. The way of the transgressor certainly did have its pleasant stretches. Probably Providence considered Chelmy penance enough for any offender not steeped in crime, and so was giving her her afternoon scot-free. She would be sorry when it was over, sorry to say good-by to the man. She would doubtless see him again, since he knew Lady Chelmy, but everything would be different. The Alicia person would be with him, and then there would be Lady Chelmy and the personages—and youth was very short, and— She looked into the imploring eyes again.

"It would be beautiful," she said softly. "I've dreamed of a garden like that." Then, by way of a sop to Alicia, she added, with painstaking lack of sentiment, "and I'm famished—wolfish!"

So they went through a crumbling archway to a courtyard, where echoes

of coaching days clung to the walls, and where a genial landlord welcomed them, and then on, through a half-open door, to the garden and the river.

It was the Garden of Dreams. Pat recognized it at once; a place of drowsy murmurs and drifting perfumes and melting color. High brick walls shut it in, save where the river flowed, blue and silver in the sunlight, brown and gold in the shade; and, against the mellow red of the walls, the glow of ripening fruit and the soft yellows and pinks of climbing roses caught and held the sunshine.

Pat walked along the narrow path, breast high in lilies and larkspur, an ache in her throat and her heart and her soul, the ache that belongs to the beauty and sweetness of the world and has nothing to do with pain; and, because the thing was too big to be felt alone, she quite unconsciously put out an impulsive little hand to the tweed-clad arm beside her and left it there.

The man looked down at her and conquered an inclination to lay his own hand over hers. To show the slightest consciousness of the thing that was setting his pulses tingling, would be to spoil the good moment. He realized that. There was no coquetry in the girl's face. It was all a-dream. She had come into a place that had been waiting for her, as one does come wonderfully into such mysterious places at the turn of a road or through an unexpected door, and there was a quiver on her lips, a glow in her eyes. That he was with her, and that his being there did not mar her happiness, must content him; but, there in her dream garden, he woke and knew that the world had changed since morning, and that he had traveled farther than Kent.

They went down to the table in the wide-flung shade, and sat there silently, with the breeze whispering to the leaves overhead, and the ripples whispering to the long grasses at their feet. There was a weir somewhere beyond the garden, and the swirl and rush of it sent a message of turmoil that was like an echo of passion to a heart at peace. The scents of the garden flowers

came and went fitfully upon the sun-warmed air, and, from somewhere among the honeysuckle and roses that dripped over the gables of the inn, a bird tossed snatches of song.

Pat listened to the breeze, and the ripples, and the bird. The man listened to the weir; but neither spoke, until, down along the garden path, came a red-cheeked maid, bearing a laden tray, which she set upon the table between the dreaming girl and the waking man.

Piles of currant bread, preternaturally thin, spread with fresh butter, whose yellow was no triumph of the chemist's art; scones, piping hot, when the muf-fin-dish cover was lifted; strawberry jam, whose uncrushed berries glowed, jewellike, in luscious sirup; a round, comfortably ample jug of cream as yellow as the butter; a teapot from whose spout the steam leaped merrily.

Pat came back to earth with a rush.

"And they call this 'having tea'!" she said rapturously. "I call it wallowing in Keats. All sorts of things 'lush'; and wouldn't that jam do for 'lucent syrups tinct with cinnamon' as well as anything in the St. Agnes Eve spread?"

"Well, it's corking," agreed the man, "but it isn't exactly the accepted idea of 'lushing'."

Pat was glad that he had waited for tea and her changed mood. Most men, so she told herself, would have talked. He did not talk much, even after she had shaken off the garden witchery and was merry again, but she hardly noticed that; for, in the reaction, she was foolishly, light-heartedly gay, and most unromantically hungry.

"We must go," she said, at last. "See how long the shadows are now. That's the trouble with this world. If only the sun would stay up where it belongs, and not go about putting an end to perfect days!"

"There's moonlight," suggested the man.

She smiled.

"At Chelmsley! Now what can one do with a moon and a personage?"

"Omit the age and keep the person."

"Do you live far from Chelmsley?" asked Pat irrelevantly.

"Only a twenty-minute run."

"That's not far."

"Too far."

Poor Alicia!

When the two went their way out of Arcady, they found the courtyard door closed and locked.

"That's odd!" said the man. "We must have looked like suspicious characters, prone to slipping off and leaving unpaid bills. They've made sure of us. We are evidently expected to go through the house."

A little walk led around past the kitchens and through an arbor to a side door; and, as they followed it, the friendly maid who had served their tea appeared for a moment at a kitchen window. Her cheeks were redder than ever. Her eyes were big with excitement—or was it alarm? She made a swift, unintelligible gesture, and vanished.

"What did she mean?" Pat asked wonderingly.

The man shook his head.

"Heaven knows. One would think that she wanted to warn us of something. Perhaps this door isn't for the public."

"But she looked so distressed."

"They may keep the family skeleton behind the door. I'll go in first."

He laughed as he lifted the latch and stepped into the shadowy hall; but the laugh died a violent death. A burly man, with a stolid face, laid a hand on his shoulder, and a smaller man, whom Lyttleton was vaguely conscious of having seen before, stepped forward to look into his face.

"It's him, all right," said the small man.

Across the hall was the landlord, and, beyond a partly opened door, a group of curious, peering faces was visible.

Lyttleton shook the hand from his shoulder and faced the man to whom it belonged.

"What the devil——" he began hotly.

"Take it easy, lad," interrupted the man, with cheerful philosophy. "Take it easy. We haven't spoiled your tea party, have we? It aren't everybody that would 'a' been so thoughtful. But

now, as the tea party's over, we'll be gettin' back to X——. If you'd hand the bag over, pleasantlike, it 'u'd save trouble; but you'd have to go along, just the same."

"The bag?" echoed Lyttleton, in bewilderment.

"That's it, lad. Surprisin', now, aren't it?"

"You're mad, man. What bag?"

"Come, now, what's the use? Didn't Lady Ancaster leave her bag with her jewels in it in the telephone booth at the King's Arms? An' wasn't you the next un in the booth? An' haven't you left in a hurry, without waitin' to pay? An' aren't you no sooner gone than my lady comes back with her maid, an' the bag is gone? Maybe you'll be sayin' you wasn't at the King's Arms this arfternoon, at four o'clock. This fellow here, he showed you where you'd find the telephone."

He jerked a thumb toward the small man.

"Of course I was at the King's Arms; and I did forget to pay. I was in a hurry, and——"

"Exactly. You was there. Dixon, as runs the house, sends for me, me bein' the constable, an' I starts to follow you up. No trouble, it aren't. First jump, I runs across a boy as seen you when you come runnin' out to the lady—waitin' round on Ferry Street, on the quiet, she was, instead of bein' out in front, like other motorin' folks. The young un says you was in a desprit hurry; but the lady, she says she thinks it would be a good thing to put off the things you'd planned an' stay over to do Helmston Fair.

"'Everybody'll be screwed,' says she, 'an' it ought to be easy pickin's for us, where everybody'll be screwed.'

"'But there's some as is sober,' the boy tells you.

"'Never mind. A few sober ones can't queer our game,' says the lady.

"The boy's sister tells the same story to a T."

"'Jimmy and Ann Maria!'

Pat's voice sounded small and queer. The constable nodded.

"That's them. Likely you thought

they was too young to notice; but their mother's a respectable woman. She's brought 'em up right, an' they knows there's somethin' wrong, when they hears how you talks about the fair. It always brings crooks, the fair does. The girl doesn't want to talk, says somethin' about your bein' pretty an' givin' her a sixpence—for all the world like a woman. Women things haven't got no public sperrit; but when Jimmy sees he can help me, he talks up, all right."

"But I was only joking," Pat explained. "I only meant that—"

"Don't try to explain a joke to that fellow," interrupted Lyttleton. "And don't worry. This is simply ridiculous. I thought Dogberry was dead. It's a rotten shame that you should be let in for all this, but it won't take long to straighten it out."

She was holding fast to his arm, now.

"See here, my man," he said quietly, although his face was white with anger. "You are making a bad break. I am Lord Lyttleton; and Lady Ancaster is a friend of my mother's."

"Pleased to meet your lordship." The constable's knowing grin was evidence that, after all, he did appreciate a joke, of a sort. "An' who's the lady?"

Lyttleton turned on him; but Pat clung fast to his left arm, and the constable laid a heavy hand on his right arm.

"Doesn't any one here know you?" asked the girl hopefully.

"I'm afraid not. You see, I've been away for four years, and I wasn't here often, even in the old days. The place has changed hands, and I suppose the new man put in his own people. There's no use raising a row. I can straighten the thing out quickly enough in X—."

"Well, you'll have a chance," put in the constable. "Now, if you'll come along—"

There was the chug of a motor car outside the inn, and the front door opened to let in a short, fat man, in dust coat and goggles, who looked with interest at the group in the hall. The

landlord hurried forward to greet the newcomer.

"This way, sir," he said, opening the door into the office, and, as he followed the guest, he added, with hushed importance: "A little matter of the law, sir. Burke, he's constable from X—, has been chasin' two crooks as has been liftin' jewels. He finds 'em here, havin' tea in my garden. Smooth pair they are, too, sir. The man looks for all the world like a gentleman, an' the girl's as pretty as a picture."

"She is that," agreed the guest. "I'll take a brandy and soda."

Meanwhile, in the hall, argument had grown hot.

"Of course, the lady will not need to go with us to X—," said Lyttleton.

"I've got warrants for the two of you, an' she'll have to go along."

"But that's an outrage! I tell you, the whole thing's a mistake. I'll prove it to you if you'll take me to Lady Ancaster."

"You'll both have to go." Burke was genial, but positive.

"Ten pounds for you if you will allow the lady to stay here until you see how things turn out in X—. The landlord can give her a comfortable room and have it watched."

Burke wavered, but shook his head.

"No offense to the lady, but I've got to do my duty."

"Do it; but don't exceed it. Fifteen pounds for you, and five to the landlord for his trouble."

The landlord, who had seen his transient guest off and rejoined the group in the hall, put in a word.

"There might be somethin' in what the gentleman says, Burke," he urged. "Now, if he'd turn out to be Lord Lyttleton, after all—"

"An' who's the lady?" asked the constable, for the second time.

"It's none of your damned business."

Lyttleton's patience was entirely gone, but his manners reasserted themselves, and he turned contritely to Pat.

"I beg your pardon!"

"Never mind. I liked it."

Pat tried a little laugh, but it met a sob halfway.

"Twenty pounds and ten to the land-lord."

Another sob would have doubled the bid, but Burke did not know that. He nodded sulkily, suspiciously.

"Ave it your way. But, Sims, you'll be responsible to the law, mind ye."

"Don't ye fear," advised the landlord cheerfully. "I'll put Brennan outside her door. There's nothin' can move Brennan, once you've given him his orders. An' I'll call the missis," he added encouragingly to Lyttleton. "She's a rare un for bein' kind, the missis is. She'll make the lady comfortable."

"I'd rather go with you," begged Pat. "I'd much rather go with you!"

Lyttleton lifted her hand from his arm, and held it for a moment.

"It's much better this way," he said, in a low voice. "The constable is the stupid, honest kind, that can't be bought off altogether, and I'll have to run over with him and fix things up; but there's no reason why you should share the annoyance and publicity of it, and meet Lady Ancaster, who is a friend of Lady Chelmsley's. I'll be back in an hour or so. There's no use trying to tell you how cut up I am about the whole wretched business, but who could have imagined—"

"Nobody could—and it's all my fault."

She was very young, very childish, very near tears. He wanted to take her in his arms and comfort her.

"I had no right to come," she went on remorsefully. "I knew I hadn't. One always does pay; but I guess one has to be old before one realizes that. It always seems as if one could dodge such payments. It would serve me right if I landed in jail. Yes, it would. Don't be so nice to me, or I'll cry. I think I will, anyway. And I'll be late to dinner, and it's all so horrid, and I know perfectly what you think about me—"

"I doubt that," said the man gravely.

"Here's the missis," announced the landlord.

A fat, pleasant-faced, competent-looking woman, evidently divided

'twixt suspicion and pity, looked into Pat's face, and allowed the pity to sweep the suspicion from her eyes.

"You poor lamb!" she said, gathering the girl to her ample bosom. "You come along with me—an' the devil fly away with fools that don't know a real lady when they sees her! Sims, I'm ashamed of you, that I am!"

She swept toward the stairway, carrying Pat with her, but tossed a crumb of comfort to Lyttleton as she went.

"Now, don't ye fret, sir. I'll look after her as if she was my own, an' it won't be the first time I've waited on quality, sir. But men! Lord save us, men! An' bats! An' moles!"

She vanished in a cloud of righteous indignation and contempt, and Lyttleton turned to the constable.

"Let's hurry along," he said curtly. "We could make it more quickly in my car; but it only holds two, and I suppose that won't do you. I'll leave it here till I come back."

"Yes, sir. I'll see to it, sir."

The landlord's own misgivings had been strengthened by his wife's outburst. The missis *had* worked for the gentry before she married, and she did know a thing or two about them.

"Never mind the car. See that the young lady is comfortable and not annoyed in any way. Here's your tenner, so you're sure of that."

"Yes, my lord. Thank you, my lord."

But the unconvinced Burke, eying the money, sniffed.

"Come easy, go easy," he commented.

Patricia, a crumpled heap on the bed of the best front chamber, heard a car roll out of the courtyard and ran to the window. Burke's prisoner was in the back seat, between the constable and the man from the King's Arms. He turned to look along the line of second-floor windows; and, catching a glimpse of the girl's face, waved an encouraging hand.

"A fine, upstandin' young gentleman as ever I see," said the missis at Pat's shoulder. "You'll just be havin' a nap until he comes back. He's the kind to come back in a hurry. Even if there

was a question of a bag in it, now, I think he'd be findin' a way out. Not that I'm thinkin' he does know anythin' about the bag, miss," she added hastily, after a glance at the girl's face. "An', if he did, it'd be the first you've heard of it. I can see that. Howsoever you come to be motorin' with him—an' he not wantin' your name mentioned—anybody can see, with half an eye, that there's no harm in you, miss."

"Go away!" blazed Pat. "Go away!"

But when, after a show of kindness, the missis did go away, leaving Pat cozily tucked up on the bed, her words lingered in the girl's mind.

"Even if there was a question of a bag!" How did she know that there wasn't? What did she know about him? Suppose he had taken the jewels? Ridiculous! But suppose he had? Of course, he said he was Lord Lyttleton, but one could say anything. Vague memories of stories about social highwaymen and gentleman burglars floated through her brain. If he didn't come back, she would know. They would send for her, then. She would be "the woman in the case." He would try to keep her out of it. She felt sure of that, but probably he couldn't. There was all that foolish talk of hers about Helmston Fair. She had always talked too much; but who could have imagined that Jimmy and Ann Maria—and Lady Ancaster—and the constable—Oh, she didn't deserve to be punished so dreadfully! She didn't!

She sobbed into the pillow for a while; and then, being young and tired from emotion and excitement, she dropped asleep.

She was wakened by the missis, who came in carrying a tray, and followed by the maid, laden with fresh towels and hot water. The room was dim, and outside the window purpling shadows were abroad in a dusky world.

"That's right, miss," said the missis, in her comfortable, throaty voice. "You've had a good sleep. Now you'll be wantin' a bite of dinner."

"Oh, no!" protested Pat.

"Yes, now, you'll be needin' it. I waited a bit, thinkin' the gentleman

would be keen an' hungry when he come in; but there's no sense in you havin' your chop overdone with waitin'."

"It must be very late."

There was dismay in Pat's voice, and the sleep had died quickly out of her eyes.

"Oh, no; not so very late. It's only a matter of eight o'clock, maybe."

"He said he'd be back in an hour."

"Yes; but now there's things that could be keepin' him. Don't ye fret, dear heart. Now, don't ye. The law's an in-an'-out thing, at best, an' I make no doubt he'd have to see all sorts of folk. It'd take time to get everythin' settled comfortablelike."

"No; something's wrong. I'm sure something's wrong. Why doesn't he telephone?"

"There's no telephone here, miss. It's nobbut a village, you know."

"He'd be here now, if everything were all right."

"But they'd a' sent for you if things was wrong. Don't ye believe in bad luck till ye meet it i' the pantry."

"But, eight o'clock! They dine at eight. I promised faithfully. Why, that's the reason I—" She stopped short.

"If you'd tell us where you was goin', we could send a lad to Buxton wi' a telegram," suggested the missis.

"It wouldn't do any good. I couldn't explain. Oh, if I had only caught the train!"

"Don't ye fret," soothed the missis, going back to her old refrain. "It'll all come out right. You'll see. I'm needed down below; but I'll run up again in a little while.

"There's sommut wrong, Susan," she said, to the maid, as they went kitchenward. "She'd no call to be with the young gentleman. That's sure, an' she knows it; but there's no harm in her. I say that again, an' I do think she was on her way to friends, somewhere, whether the young gentleman was in good faith or not. It's like, y he wasn't, or he'd be back here before now."

"Indeed, I'm that sorry for the poor young lady," sighed Susan. "An' he

such a pretty gentleman, too! I says to myself, when I takes tea to them in the garden, 'Now, there's a pair,' says I, 'there's a pair of lovers as *is* lovers—like the ones they puts in books—him so handsome an' her so pretty, an' both of 'em so happy.' I can't think as how he's a bad un."

"It 'ud be well if girls'd judge bad uns more by their doin's an' less by their looks," admonished the missis.

Pat, left to herself, washed her tear-stained face, smoothed her rumpled hair, and sat down by the window, ignoring the dinner tray. He had been gone three hours. That surely meant trouble. He had said that he would only need to see Lady Ancaster. Probably he was in jail in X—, and they would send back for her. They might come any minute. Of course, she could prove who she was, after a time; she could prove that she didn't know him, had no connection with him, but that would be awful. She would have to call for Lady Chelmlly's help, and telegraph for Aunt Dee—and she would almost rather go to jail for jewel stealing. If only there were some way out of the scrape! If only she could get to Chelmlly! They would never think of looking for her there.

She looked out of the window. A sheer drop to the public street. She listened at the door. Heavy breathing beyond it and an occasional shuffle of feet told her that Brennan was on duty. As she went back disconsolately toward the window, her ear caught the sound of light tapping somewhere. It was not in the room—somewhere beyond the room wall, rather. Wherever it was, it did not concern her. The tapping ceased for a moment, then began again, cautious, insistent, but barely audible. It seemed to come from a big wardrobe that stood against the wall at one side of the room.

Faintly curious, Pat went over to the wardrobe, and opened its door. As she did so, a low murmur came to her ears.

"If you could move the wardrobe aside a little, miss. There's a door here, an' the bolt's on your side. This is Susan, miss, the maid."

"What do you want?" asked Pat, amazed, wondering.

"I was thinkin', miss, if you wanted to get out. I'm that sorry for ye; I am so. An' there's a door to the alley, an' you go down the side stairs. Nobuddy 'ud be meetin' you."

"But where would I go?" asked Pat hopelessly. "It's awfully kind of you; but I couldn't run away, you know."

"Why not, miss, if so be the gentleman wasn't comin' back, an' you didn't want to get into any more trouble? There's Peter, miss. He's my young man, an' he's that steady. He runs a car for Mr. Higgins, that has the brewery over to Buxton; an' he's over here to-night. I was to meet wi' him, back o' the schoolus, when I could get out. He'd do anything for me, Peter would, an' no questions asked. If you was really goin' to friends not too far from here, he could take you there, an' nobuddy but him an' you an' me the wiser. The missis she don't know nothin' about Peter. She don't hold wi' keepin' company. I'd just take you to him, an' run back, an' nobuddy 'ud know I'd been out. They'd think you'd found a way yourself."

"But they would think I had done something bad, and was afraid to face the consequences."

"Well, ain't you, miss—not the somethin' bad, I don't mean, but the consequences?"

Pat blushed. She was. And, moreover, she would take a long chance to get out of the hateful situation, even though she was not so guilty as she had been made to seem.

"Are you sure that we could get out, without being seen?"

"Yes, miss, if you'll come right along."

"And you think Peter will take me and keep quiet about it?"

"Indeed he will, miss, an' nobuddy knows he's here or that Mr. Higgins' car is here. It'll be as easy!"

"Wait a minute," whispered Pat, making a swift, reckless decision. Carefully, she pushed the wardrobe aside and unbolted the door. Susan joined her.

"Hurry, now, miss. Here's your coat an' hat. I'll carry your bag."

"But you may get into trouble about this," demurred Pat.

"Not if you're quick, miss. I knows Peter, an' I don't believe a young lady like you has had nothin' to do wi' stealin'—nor the young gentleman, no more. He's got an honest look like Peter, he has. Come now, miss."

They slipped through the room beyond the wardrobe, down a hall and a narrow stairway, out of a side door into an alleyway, and, meeting no one on the way, came speedily to a big car waiting in the shadow of overhanging trees. Susan ran on ahead, and Pat heard and saw a warm salute; but Susan had little time for love-making.

"Here's a young lady, Peter. She's in trouble, an' you've got to take her where she wants to go, an' say nothin' about it to nobuddy. I can't tell you about it now."

"But, see here—" stammered Peter.

Susan closed his mouth with a frank kiss.

"Would I be the one to be gettin' ye into trouble, lad? You'll do this for me, now. I've told the lady you would, an' you wouldn't be shamin' me to her. Off wi' ye, lad. You'll not be sorry. Good-by, miss. Don't ye worry, now. You can trust Peter."

"If the gentleman should come—" said Pat.

"I'll see that he knows what's happened. Oh, no, miss. I wasn't doin' it for pay."

"But you must take it," insisted Pat, pressing a gold piece into the friendly hand, "and if there's any trouble for you because of me, you must send me word, by Peter."

"God bless you, miss!" said romantic Susan.

She picked up her skirts, and scuttled away into the dark; and Pat found herself spinning through the gloom beside a bewildered, but docile, Peter.

"Where shall I take you, miss?" he asked.

"Do you know Chelmy?"

"Oh, yes, miss."

"I'm going to visit Lady Chelmy. There was an accident—a misunderstanding—"

Peter's face cleared miraculously. A Chelmy visitor could not fatally compromise a respectable chauffeur.

"We'll do it in 'arf an hour, miss," he promised cheerfully; and he was as good as his word.

"Don't wait," ordered Pat nervously, when he had deposited her on the terrace at Chelmy. She parted with another gold piece, watched the car run down the drive, then turned and rang. She was too late for dinner. She would probably find a frigid hostess. But, compared to the jail at X—! In spite of her embarrassment, her conscience, Pat's spirits soared. She felt equal to the personages. She even faced, with undisturbed calm, the severe and imposing footman who opened the door.

"Miss Herford," she said, as tranquilly as if young women guests always dropped out of the night in such inconsequential fashion. "Will you tell Lady Chelmy that I was unavoidably delayed, that I have dined, and that, if she will excuse me, I will not join her guests this evening?"

So alpine was she, so self-assured, so imperturbably at her ease, that the footman was impressed. His hauteur actually relaxed.

"Yes, my lady. They are still at dinner. If you will come this way, I will call your maid."

A quarter of an hour later, Pat, arrayed in a pink boudoir gown, lay among the cushions of a *chaise longue* and watched a trim maid lay out her toilet articles on the dressing table. She was glad that the fittings of that dressing case did her credit. They had been an extravagance.

"Your trunks, miss?" asked the maid.

"They were sent by train. I missed the train myself."

"Yes, miss. I'm afraid they will not be brought over to-night; but they will be here before dressing time in the morning."

"That will do very nicely. You may go now. I will ring when I want you."

"Thank you, miss."

Pat was alone, safe from everything, except Lady Chelmy's disapproval. She snuggled more comfortably into the cushions, and tried to relax brain and nerves and body, but did not succeed. Round and round in her mind went the events of the day. Over and over again she lived the experience, from the moment when she had said good-by to her aunt, to the moment when the protecting doors of Chelmy had closed between her and a world that had unquestionably been "full of a number of things."

Sometimes it was the joy of the day that held her—the sunshine, and the laughter, and the white roads between the green hedgerows, and the garden magic; but, more often, it was the scene in the inn hallway from which she could not wrench her thoughts away, that awful quarter hour of payment for an afternoon of stolen happiness. Payment with usury, it seemed to her. Her face crimsoned, her eyes filled with angry tears, as she lived over again the embarrassment, the humiliation, the alarm. She had learned her lesson, but she had paid heavily for it, and not all the light-hearted volatility of her temperament could lift her altogether out of the self-reproach and shame.

After a time, Lady Chelmy's maid came with a message from Pat's hostess. Lady Chelmy hoped that Miss Herford was quite comfortable, and would look forward to seeing Miss Herford the next morning.

Miss Herford was quite comfortable, thank you, and it was so good of Lady Chelmy, and the next morning's pleasure would be a fulfillment of Miss Herford's fondest wishes. At least that was the general tenor of the return message; but, when the emissary had departed, Pat went back to scrambling around the squirrel cage of her thoughts.

At eleven o'clock, she rang for her maid, and went to bed; but, having had two long sleeps in the course of the day, she stayed awake, hour after hour, wrestling with her conscience and making good resolutions.

Being only twenty, Pat showed no ravages, when, after her eventful day and wakeful night, she smiled at the maid who came softly into the room about eight o'clock the next morning.

"You're awake, miss? I was thinking you would be sleeping late, this morning; but I thought I'd just look, and, if so be you wasn't sleeping, you wouldn't have to wait for your tea."

Half an hour later, tubbed, tea-ed, immaculate in the most simple, yet the most sophisticated of white muslins, Pat stood at an open window and looked out over a vast expanse of shrub-bordered lawn toward a shadowy place of wide-spreading beeches and oaks. Off to the right, steps led down to a garden, whose flood of color rolled off along winding paths, but Pat shook her head at the alluring vista. She had had enough of gardens. They came just before inn hallways. No, she did not want to go to the gardens; but the morning was wonderful, and Thérèse had said that Lady Chelmy was never visible before eleven. It was only half past eight now, a most bourgeois hour to be awake and dressed when one was visiting the rich and great of the earth; but bed had seemed a weariness, and memories of yesterday had begun to crowd upon her. Out there, where the great trees beckoned, she could find the self of the day before yesterday. She was sure of it.

So she went down the great stairway and out upon the terrace, where Peter had left her, and, following a winding path, she hurried across the lawn and plunged into the world of beechen green. Such a friendly place of fluid green shade, and mysterious half lights, and frank, laughing, sunlit spaces! Almost at its margin, the day before yesterday met her, and they went hand in hand down the emerald ways.

At every step, Pat's spirits rose. How could one hug a sense of sin on such a morning? In the revision of feeling, she threw back her head and sang aloud, tossing her voice up toward the blue sky beyond the great boughs. It was a charming voice, sweet and liltting and fresh and clear, a most satis-

factory voice for summer-morning song, though it would not have electrified a Covent Garden audience.

"Though you give me a coach and six,
Six black horses as black as pitch,
No, I will not walk,
No, I will not talk,
No, I will not walk and talk with you."

A pleasant tenor voice took up the refrain, somewhere among the shadows. Pat stood still, in a little open glade, the sun tangled in her hair, and touching her frock to dazzling whiteness.

"I will give you the key to my heart,
And we will be married till death us do part;
Madam, will you walk,
Madam, will you talk,
Madam, will you walk and talk with me?"

The song ended on a laugh, and from behind a group of birches a man came into the open, cap in hand, a dog at his heels.

"Temptation beset me," he said lightly. "I apologize. This must be the expected Miss Herford. I am Captain Dunsmere, Lord Chelmyl's nephew."

"I am Miss Herford," Pat admitted. "And I assure you, Captain Dunsmere, I don't usually go about making the welkin ring; but I fancied no one else was abroad so early, and the morning was so perfect—"

"There's a bird down in the glen who feels just as you do about the morning. Binks and I have been listening to him. If you'll really walk and talk with me, I'll take you down and introduce you to a kindred soul."

Pat looked houseward.

"No one about, yet, except the servants," Captain Dunsmere said quickly. "The crowds Aunt Evelyn collects aren't usually keen on dew-peared mornings, and all that sort of thing."

"Are there many guests now?" asked Pat.

"No, rather a small party."

"All terribly important?"

He laughed.

"Some one has been telling you about Aunt Evelyn's house parties. It's rather awful, sometimes. I've seen gatherings here beside which a council

on high Olympus would look like a cabaret performance. But we are being let down easily now."

"Tell me about them," she urged. It would be a help to be forearmed.

"Well, there's Harberton—in the cabinet, you know, and tremendously busy saving England—and his wife. She's clever, too, in her way. Hard, ambitious woman. Make a fine hanging judge, I should say. Charevoix, the French ambassador, is of the party. You'll like him. He'll be bored to death here; but that's what he gets for being a diplomat, and for having married the daughter of a millionaire button manufacturer. Madame Charevoix is so aristocratic now that a mere mention of buttons, or bourgeoisie, or anything beginning with b turns her quite faint. It would be nice of you to wear only frocks that hook, while you're here, Miss Herford.

"Then there's Penny Seton. Ever meet him? He's gossip extraordinary, when he isn't painting portraits of founders. The 'Penny' hasn't anything to do with the price of his portraits. His name's Pennington. Mother was one of the Devonshire Penningtons. That helps him a lot with the founders. His relatives were terribly cut up when he took to paint; but now he's an R. A., and upholding the sacred traditions of British art, and making good money, and we consider that he has redeemed himself. Look out for him, though, if you have any guilty secret."

"Lord and Lady Fenton and their daughter are the others. Lady Fenton talks most of the time, and never finishes a sentence or an idea. You won't mind, though, after you get used to her system. Lord Fenton's one of the finest. Splendid old English type, stunning-looking, kindly old chap, with brains, and a sense of humor, and an eye for a pretty woman. He's helping Harberton save England; but he isn't taking it so hard as Harberton. That's the crowd. Can you wonder that I burst into song when I met you?"

"And Lord Fenton's daughter?" asked Pat demurely.

The captain colored.

"Oh, Lady Mary! She's a good sort."

It was not impassioned; but it might mean volumes. Pat registered a vow not to interfere, though she had a suspicion that she might be tempted. Life was apparently going to be dull; and, with only one young man— But Lady Mary should have him. Patricia Herford was a reformed character.

When she went to her room later, leaving Captain Dunsmere in the breakfast room, she wrote letters for an hour, and then received a visit from Lady Chelmy, who was gracious in a somewhat bleak way, and said kind things that just missed being warming, and inquired punctiliously about Mrs. Eustis, and the malady of the Dowager Mrs. Eustis, and hoped Pat would be happy at Chelmy, and regretted rather austerely that she had missed her train and had failed to meet her fellow guests at dinner.

"But you motored down with friends?" she said, half in question, and half in statement of fact.

Pat did not contradict her. Luncheon would be at one, it appeared. If Miss Herford would be down a little before that, the rest would probably be about somewhere, and Lady Chelmy would see that she met them. In the meantime, if she could amuse herself—Lady Chelmy had not quite finished her correspondence.

"Oh, please, Lady Chelmy, don't think of me! I am never dull," said Pat, and she smiled so whole-heartedly as she said it, that the youth of her penetrated even through the older woman's crust of formality.

"I don't believe you ever would be, my dear," she said, with a smile of her own that approached the human. Then, with a return to the monumental, she added:

"I never am dull myself. My responsibilities are too many to permit it."

"Poor glacial deposit!" murmured Pat sympathetically, as the door closed behind her hostess.

Luncheon went off more cheerfully than Pat had expected. Monsieur Charevoix sat at her right, and proved

to be the delightful and improper ambassador of Mrs. Eustis' Chelmy memories, though his impropriety was not manifest. Across the table, Lady Mary, a pretty blonde, purred to Captain Dunsmere, and it seemed to Pat that Lady Chelmy's eyes held a gleam of approval when they rested on the pair.

There was much talk of politics, which Pat did not understand, but in which Lady Chelmy and Mrs. Harberton evidently took a vivid interest. Lady Fenton trailed a high, thin voice along inexhaustible reaches of talk, and Madame Charevoix listened with rapt attention suited to the conversation of the aristocracy. Lord Fenton dropped an occasional word into the political discussion, but devoted himself chiefly to the very excellent luncheon. Now and then he sent an approving glance to the pretty girl beside Monsieur Charevoix.

Looking and listening, Pat admitted that Captain Dunsmere's sketches, if not overkind, had been drawn from life. Every one was quite what she had expected, except Penny Seton, gossip and Royal Academician. He perplexed her, showing an interest in her that would have been flattering if he had appeared to derive more pleasure from his exhaustive study of her.

"Our worthy friend across the table is fascinated, pitifully fascinated, Mademoiselle Herford," said Monsieur Charevoix. "I weep to see so poor a defense. One must fall—I understand that—but one should make some slight struggle for the credit of the sex."

"He isn't fascinated," said Pat. "He isn't even interested in me. He's interested in something I make him think of."

Charevoix smiled.

"And do all American young ladies analyze men's glances so coolly?"

"Only cool glances," Pat said lightly. "There's not warmth enough in Mr. Seton's, for all their quantity, to interfere with calm analysis."

The party separated after luncheon. Lady Mary and the captain went off after specimens. It appeared that Lady

Mary was passionately fond of botanizing, and she needed some one to carry things for her. Pat regretted that, in all her eventful career, she had never thought of botany. She herself was fairly well amused by the older men, and there was some tennis later, when the botanizing was temporarily suspended, and then tea on the lawn. It wasn't wildly exciting, but it was pleasant enough, this Chelmsford life.

Dinner was a repetition of luncheon, with a change of menu and of companions. Pat found herself beside Lord Fenton, and incontinently lost her heart to him. She told him about the ranch, and about Chicago, and, though, remembering a warning, she did not tell him much about England, she joked about things much nearer than the Pribiloff Islands, and he seemed to like it. Really, Chelmsford was turning out very well, after all. Penny Seton was the only blot on the landscape. He did stare so.

She looked across at him, found his eyes fixed upon her, and saw a sudden illumination sweep across his face. A look of satisfaction, mixed with excitement, supplanted the puzzlement in his eyes. Apparently he had just solved some riddle, had just remembered something. Pat wondered at the phenomenon, and dismissed it from her thoughts. Probably she had reminded him of some one. She was always reminding people of some one.

It was a little after nine o'clock when a footman appeared at Miss Herford's shoulder, as she sat talking to Madame Charevoix in the drawing-room.

"If you please, miss, there's a young person. She says her name's Susan."

A wave of red surged over the girl's face. Susan! What could it mean?

"Where is she?" she asked, with a fair imitation of indifference.

"In the servants' hall, miss."

"Send her to my room. I will see her there."

She left the drawing-room with leisurely grace; but, once in the hall, she sped to her room, and had been there only a moment when there was a knock, and Susan entered.

It seemed that Susan's cheeks were always red, her eyes always round with excitement. The cheeks grew redder, the eyes rounder, as she ducked a curtsey.

"If you please, miss, he would make me come."

"But I don't know her name," says I.

"Go to Chelmsford and ask for the American young lady," says he.

"There was no quietin' him, miss. He tells the missis he wants me to go on an errand for him, an' he tells his man—what he telegraphed for this morning—to take me over here in his car—what Peter 'ud 'a' said, if so be he'd met us!—an' here I am. An' I beg pardon, I'm sure, miss; but he would have it that way."

"I'm very glad to see you again, Susan." Pat wondered whether her voice sounded as queer to Susan as it did to her. "I wanted another chance to thank you—and Peter."

"Oh, it wasn't nothin', miss, an' didn't I say all along as it was a shame to think you'd do any harm, an' the poor young gentleman, too? An' me hardly back from you an' Peter when he comes staggerin' in, with a man helpin' him along."

"Where is she?" says he—an' he all whitelike, an' his poor head all done up in bandages, an' more dead than alive, seems like, but speakin' plain an' quiet. 'Tell her I'm here,' he says. 'An' if she'll come along down, we'll make it in a 'arf hour,' he says. 'Tell her quick,' says he.

"You never can do it, sir," says the man as was with him—Farmer Banks, it was, as lives eight miles beyond us.

"Of course I can do it," says the young gentleman.

"Sims an' the missis was starin' at him, an' me weak i' the knees because I knows you wasn't there."

"Tell her I'm back," he says again, droppin' down in a chair. 'Tell her everythin's all right, but there was an accident to the car, an' it kept me.'

"The missis she goes upstairs, an' Sims he starts to pumpin' Banks; but in a minute the missis is back, lookin' as if she'd seen a ghost."

"She's gone!" she says, sort of whisperin' like.

"Gone!" says everybody but the young gentleman. He just gets to his feet, lookin' whiter than ever.

"Yes; she's gone," says the missis. "The wardrobe's moved. She's got out that door."

"But where's she gone?" asks Sims.

"You tell me," she snaps.

"It was like a play, miss.

"Whatever'll Burke say?" Sims he groans.

"He won't say nothin'. He's too bad hurt to talk," Farmer Banks says.

"I must find her," says the young gentleman, startin' for the door. "I must find her," he says again, kind o' thick an' chokedlike. "An', wi' that, he crumples up like a wet rag an' drops, an' we puts him to bed in the corner room, next to the one you had, miss."

She came to her first full stop, breathless, but elated. The last two days had paid the dramatic arrears of a humdrum life, and she was still in the thick of the excitement.

"But is he very ill?" questioned Pat. Nothing seemed of importance until she should have heard the answer to that. She was not even curious as to what had happened at X—.

And when Susan, still struggling for breath, did not answer at once, the other girl took her by the shoulders and gave her an imperative little shake.

"Is he much hurt?"

"Well, miss, he's hurt. There's a bad cut or two on his head, an' some ribs broke, an' somethin' sprained in his arm; but the doctor says he'll be all right, if he keeps quiet, though he'd ought to 'a' stayed at Farmer Banks', instead of comin' on that night. You see, when Burke gets to X—, they hunts up the lady that had lost her jewels, an' she says, why, she has found the jewels in her dressin' case. An' she knows the young gentleman, all right, too. I guess Burke he feels foolish enough. He says he'll take the young gentleman right back to our place, an' they starts off; but, what wi' Burke bein' upset about makin' a fool of himself, an' the young gentleman bein' in

a hurry, an' a dog bein' in the road, an' somethin' goin' wrong wi' the insides of the car, they lands in a ditch, alongside Farmer Banks' place. Burke he had the car on top o' him, but the young gentleman, when he comes to, he manages to get to the house—an' him all blood an' lookin' wildlike. He *did* give Mrs. Banks a turn! Well, he tells them to get Burke, an' then he faints away on the kitchen floor—an' it as clean as wax, thank God, Mrs. Banks says. She came over this mornin' to tell us about it. You never hears the rights of a story from the men.

"The farmer he sends a man to Buxton for the doctor; an' it looks, for a while, as if both of 'em is dead; but the doctor he says Burke may pull through, an' that the young gentleman will get about in a little while, if he does as he's told. The young gentleman he waits till the doctor's gone, an' then he gets up an' says he must go.

"Go where?" Banks asks.

"To the White Hart," says the young gentleman—meanin' us, you know, miss.

"But you can't," says Banks.

"I must," says the young gentleman.

"An' he did. Mrs. Banks says her husband swore most awful to hear; but at last he got up the cart, an' says he'll take the young fool—beggin' your pardon, miss—but that it aren't his fault if he dumps a corpse into the White Hart; which he didn't, though. An' that's how it all happened, miss."

She gasped for a moment or two, then swept on:

"When the young gentleman come to, up in the corner room, he *did* take on—all about you, miss. He was kind o' out o' his head like, an' nobuddy could quiet him—but he didn't say anythin' you'd mind. I was up there a good deal, helpin' the missis; an' this afternoon she goes downstairs, he bein' sleepin', an' leaves me to watch him. Pretty soon he opens his eyes, an' he looks as if he knows what's what; an' I just ups an' tells him all about you an' me an' Peter.

"Oh, miss, he was that pleased! He says, 'Susan,' he says, 'you're a brick!'

says he. 'An' you shan't be sorry, neither,' he says. Then he drops to sleep like a baby, an' when he wakes up again he's as chipper as you please, only the doctor won't let him get out o' bed. But he would have it that I must come over an' tell you he'd tried to come back an' take you to dinner.

"Whatever'll she be thinkin' o' me, Susan?" he says. 'I can't have her thinkin' that o' me,' he says.

"An' so I come, miss."

"It's very good of you." Pat was much subdued.

"What'll I tell him, miss?"

Pat hesitated.

"Tell him that I'm sorry," she said, at last; "that I'm sorry he was hurt, and that I understand, and that—I—might have known he would come back."

"Yes; it's like the missis said. He's the kind of a lover that comes back to a young lady when he says he will, dead or alive," said Susan happily. "Good night, miss."

"Good night, Susan. Thank you."

Pat did not go downstairs again that night. She snuffed out the candles, and sat by the window in the moonlight, and thought about men and things.

Meanwhile, down in the drawing-room, men and things were preparing trouble for Miss Patricia Herford.

Pennington Seton had sat mute while the men lingered at the dinner table, after the departure of the women. He had shown no interest in the stories that went round, and had contributed nothing out of his ample stock of reminiscence and gossip. Yet he did not look bored. On the contrary, he had the important air of one who could, an he would, throw a bomb into the conversation. Monsieur Charevoix, always observant, noticed the subdued elation in the round, rosy little man's face and manner, and felt a mild interest. Penny was obviously brimming with gossip. That he did not incontinently overflow, indicated that some member of the Chelmy party was the subject of the gossip, and the Frenchman made a mental note to the effect that he must have the story after din-

ner. He enjoyed gossip, though he never passed it on.

He did hear the story after dinner, but not from Penny. That purveyor of spicy tales eluded him, in the exodus to the drawing-room, and was presently seen solicitously wrapping a scarf about Mrs. Harberton's shoulders and leading her out to the terrace. Charevoix smiled.

"Then I shall hear it from her," he said, to himself. "It will probably have gained in flavor."

When the couple, after a half hour's absence, came blinking into the lighted room, he smiled again. Monsieur Charevoix found life very amusing, even in its inconsequential details. Mrs. Harberton's face had taken on a faint reflection of Seton's expression. She did not look exactly elated, but she did look vividly interested, and there was hard condemnation in the folds of her thin lips.

"It is about another woman," decided the Frenchman.

Both Mrs. Harberton and Seton swept the room with eager eyes, and, quite evidently, did not find what they sought.

"Ah, Miss Herford!" Charevoix's eyes had followed the course of the glances, and had noted the disappointment. The American girl was the only absent one of the party.

"Miss Herford!" he repeated to himself. "Now, I wonder. So charming—but quite believably indiscreet—and with no one behind her here. I wish it might have been some one else."

Still, since the gossip was afloat, he might as well hear it. He drifted from group to group, until he came to anchor by Mrs. Harberton, and Penny Seton promptly relinquished his place on the sofa beside that lady. Penny was always obsequiously courteous to men of position. Charevoix watched the little man carry his rotundity lightly toward the opposite side of the room.

"An able artist, though he has not the aesthetic air," he said pleasantly. He did not define the sphere of Penny's art, but Mrs. Harberton took the remark at its face value.

"He has painted some of our best people," she said conclusively. "And his mother was a Devonshire Pennington, you know. Not at all like most of the artists. Some of the others, who are thought to be very clever, aren't persons one could really know; but Penny goes everywhere. Even Lady Chelmy, you see—and everybody knows how rigidly she draws her lines."

"Yes, I see. He's irreproachable."

"Oh, quite—and a man of very fine feelings. None of the looseness of judgment that usually prevails among artists. He's really distressed to-night. I feel sorry for him; but, as I said to him, chivalry is one thing, and one's duty to society is another. I can understand his hesitating to say anything; but, after all, he is one of us, you know, and he does owe something to us. Poor Lady Chelmy wouldn't for worlds have invited her if she had had the slightest idea; but Mrs. Eustis goes about to good houses. It only bears out what I have always said—the American system is all wrong, and the American example is demoralizing. One feels it in London, since Americans have been taken up as they have."

Monsieur Charevoix had waited patiently, his air of deferential attention urging her on.

"They allow much latitude—the Americans," he agreed sympathetically.

"Too much, far too much." Mrs. Harberton was severe. "It all leads to license, to just such things as this."

Charevoix's brows curved into question.

"You may as well know," Mrs. Harberton answered the eyebrows. "It will have to come out. I feel that Lady Chelmy should be told, but I promised Penny not to speak to her until I have his permission. This Miss Herford, you know—she was to have come down by the afternoon train Tuesday, and she missed the train. At least that is what she said. Lady Chelmy was quite put out. You see, Mrs. Eustis was leaving for the Continent at noon, and the girl was to be alone until she should be under Lady Chelmy's chap-

eronage. There wasn't even a maid. Miss Herford said she motored down with friends, and we all supposed—But Penny saw her in a common road house with a young man that afternoon—and the landlord was turning them out of the place, or at least he would have turned them out, if they hadn't been taken out. The young man was a professional crook, and had just been arrested for jewel robbery. The landlord said the young woman was as bad as the man, and had been arrested, too; but there must have been some mistake about that, or she couldn't have got away—though she may have escaped, or got out on bail, or something of that kind."

"But is Mr. Seton sure of his facts?"

Charevoix was grave, incredulous. This was more of a story than he had expected.

"Oh, yes, absolutely sure. He stopped at the place to get a drink, and there was everybody in the hall—the man, and Miss Herford, and the constable, and everybody. He didn't see the man's face, but saw Miss Herford plainly. She was crying, and clinging to the man's arm, and Penny noticed her especially, because he thought her so pretty. I don't admire her style, myself. She's so American, and her clothes are too expensive."

Charevoix turned the eye of memory on Miss Herford's face and dinner frock, and refused to enter them as evidence against her; but his taste was French.

"It would be a very serious thing to start a story of this kind about a young girl."

He realized that it was not diplomatic to champion the other woman, but he was a man as well as a diplomat, and he had liked the girl who had sat beside him at luncheon. He was inclined to think that Penny Seton had made a mistake.

Mrs. Harberton's lips tightened to a thinner line.

"Men are very lenient, Monsieur Charevoix, when a young person is pretty, but there is no mistake. Penny saw her plainly, as I said before, and,

when he met her here to-day, he knew that he had seen her somewhere, but, of course, without her hat and coat, and in a white frock—— He couldn't place her at first, but it bothered him until, at the dinner table to-night, it came to him, all of a sudden. He says he could hardly believe his eyes, but he would take his oath that it is the same girl."

"Resemblances are treacherous things," interposed Charevoix.

"This isn't a resemblance. It's the same girl; and it was just five o'clock when Penny went into the road house. He says he motored over from there in exactly a half hour. Miss Herford didn't arrive here until nine o'clock. We were at dinner when she came. Now, where was she from five o'clock to nine?"

"My dear lady, I don't know. I don't even know whether she was at the road house at all. I have the greatest respect for Mr. Seton's veracity; but I have no respect at all for any man's accuracy. My profession doesn't breed that sort of faith. I have known of too many queer coincidences, tricks of resemblance, flaws of memory. It would take more than any man's unsupported word or my own unsupported memory to make me believe that a young woman of accredited social position was mixed up in a road-house scandal and a jewel robbery. I couldn't afford to risk my reputation on the possible truth of such a story."

When Monsieur Charevoix was in earnest, his quiet voice and manner were impressive. Mrs. Harberton looked uneasy.

"Well, of course, one should be very sure. Still, I do think that Lady Chelmy——"

"It would be wise to have absolute proof of such a story, before telling it to Lady Chelmy, about a young lady for whom she is temporarily responsible, whom you have met here as her guest. It would reflect seriously upon the hostess herself. She would investigate at once; and, if there were any mistake——"

Mrs. Harberton drew her scarf about

her shoulders as if she felt a sudden cold wind.

"I suppose you are right," she admitted grudgingly. "One must be certain of one's facts. I think, perhaps, you might caution Penny, Monsieur Charevoix. I was so surprised, so shocked, that I may have been too radical in my advice. He would listen to you."

"But, my dear lady, any man would listen to you."

The ambassador's voice was honeyed, his eyes flattering. Mrs. Harberton's lips relaxed.

"I will speak to him," she said graciously; and her companion led the conversation to Mr. Harberton's colonial policy. For the moment, Miss Herford's reputation was safe from the cabinet minister's lady.

Later in the evening, Monsieur Charevoix talked with Penny Seton, and heard the story of the road-house incident again. The tale was growing in piquant detail with each telling. The ambassador did his best to shake the narrator's confidence in his own eyes and memory; but succeeded only in weakening the little man's resolve to tell the story to Lady Chelmy. Penny admitted that his hostess might take the thing in a way that would be awkward for every one, including himself, and that, even if the landlord of the White Hart were summoned, and proved the truth of the story, Lady Chelmy might still be angry with the person who had precipitated such a scandal in her home.

"She might be forced to believe you, my boy," said Charevoix dispassionately, "but she would never forgive you for the discomfort and annoyance. A scandal at Chelmy, you know! She wouldn't get over that, and she would charge it up to you. Women are queer about such things, utterly illogical. Still, of course, if you don't mind cutting yourself off from Chelmy and Lady Chelmy's set——"

Penny protested violently. He wouldn't for worlds annoy Lady Chelmy. He had only thought—but one must be discreet in such matters. Yes; one must really be charitable. It

would probably be best to hush the matter up, for the present, at least.

When he went fussily away, to play billiards with Harberton, Charevoix permitted himself a quiet smile of satisfaction. It seemed on the cards that every one in the party except Lady Chelmy and her husband would hear the story within twenty-four hours; but it seemed likely, also, that the host and hostess would not hear it. The little Herford would doubtless be made profoundly uncomfortable, but she would be spared a humiliating scene. Things did look compromising for her; but she was young, and alone—and deucedly pretty, and good women could be so unmerciful.

In the smoking room, where he went for a sleep-inducing cigar, he found Lord Fenton; and, while they smoked, he told the old gentleman Penny's story—not by way of spreading gossip, but to forestall a less kindly telling, and to secure an ally. Lord Fenton came out with round oaths of flat disbelief.

"Stuff and nonsense! Mare's-nest!" he sputtered. "Always said Penny Seton was a fool and a liar. Nice little girl. Good little girl, too. Don't tell me there's any harm in her. Young, gay, American—but no harm. Even if she was at the fool road house—some silly mistake. Penny's an old cat. I'll tell him so. Paints stuffed prophets! Digs up scandals! Pest!"

"It might be wiser not to champion Miss Herford's cause too violently." Charevoix was smiling at the explosion. "That would antagonize the others, and make them harder on her, in order to justify themselves; but if we can make sure that nothing will be said to Chelmy and his wife, and if we can temper the feminine wind to Miss Herford herself—I will speak to Madame Charevoix. It will not change her opinion; but, in the interests of my diplomatic position—well, I think she will not mention the affair to her hostess."

"I'll forbid Augusta and Mary to speak of the silly story."

"Oh, no. I wouldn't do that." Charevoix protested quickly. "Let them talk among themselves. They will do

it, anyway. Just use any authority you have to keep the thing from Lady Chelmy. Show them that, if there were any mistake, she would have reason to be deeply offended."

"Maybe you're right. Queer things, women! Funny about that road-house and jewel business—but it's all stuff and nonsense!"

"I rather think it is," agreed Charevoix; but, as he went upstairs, he wondered how much real ammunition there was in the gun he had temporarily spiked.

"It probably was Miss Herford," he admitted, to himself. "Yet, if I am any judge of women—but why and how? If she were French, now, one might figure out—but the Americans! Rules do not fit!"

On the day after her interview with Susan, Patricia Herford found life good, extraordinarily good. She was safe in port, after an adventurous voyage, and she had not been cruising with a pirate, after all. The man of the motor and of the enchanted garden was Lord Lyttleton, just as he had said he was, and the nightmare experience at the White Hart was all an egregious mistake, and he had disobeyed the doctor's orders and risked his life to relieve her mind and take her on her way at the first possible moment. He had looked like that kind of a man. She wondered how bad the cut on his head was—poor dear!—and whether broken ribs were painful, and what chance there was of her seeing him at Chelmy. It would be very considerate in him not to come, to spare her the embarrassment of meeting him again—but she hoped that he would not be so noble as all that, and her prophetic soul told her that he would not.

Yet, three days slipped by, and he did not come. Of course, there was the hurt head—and there were the ribs. She asked Lord Fenton how long it took a broken rib to heal; and he replied cheerfully that, if there wasn't a lung puncture, or something like that, a broken rib did not amount to anything. She gathered that he had had most of his ribs broken, at one time or another,

in the hunting field, and that was reassuring; but the 'lung puncture, or something like that, haunted her. Susan wouldn't have known, even if things had been as serious as that.

Yet, in spite of the twinges of anxiety, she was enjoying Chelmy. She could have wished for more guests of her own age. Lady Mary was so stiff and queer that she hardly counted. Pat wondered, sometimes, whether her coolness was chronic or had something to do with Captain Dunsmere's divided allegiance. Probably it was chronic. All of the women in the party seemed to be enveloped in the same chilly atmosphere—all except Lady Chelmy. That glacial woman actually showed signs of a thaw. She allowed Pat to go with her on a round of visits to cottagers, and consulted her about the projected festival for the benefit of the Paddesford Home for Indigent Females, and called her "my dear."

As for the men of the party, Pat marveled that Englishmen should be so much more companionable than English women. Penny Seton seemed more embarrassed than happy when he chanced to be with her; and Harberton, though friendly, held aloof when his wife was in evidence. Pat decided that Mrs. Harberton must be a very jealous woman, and that her husband considered discretion the better part of valor. The other men, even to Lord Chelmy, with his gruff voice and shaggy eyebrows, were her devoted admirers, each in his own way vaunting his allegiance in public, and fighting her battles in private—all except Lord Chelmy, who did not know that there were serious battles to be fought.

Wherever Pat was not, there conflict raged, provided always that neither the host nor the hostess was within hearing. Monsieur Charevoix's warnings had so far postponed the inevitable day when the unpleasant story would reach Lady Chelmy's ears, but he had no hope, now, that the event could be staved off until after Miss Herford's visit should have ended. That would be expecting too much of feminine discretion. He was inwardly surprised

that the climax had been deferred three days.

Meanwhile, gossip seethed. Mrs. Harberton was convinced that Miss Herford had the jewels, and that the man was in prison or lying low somewhere. It would not be the first time that a girl of good family had become infatuated with a crook and helped him in his work.

Madame Charevoix, with Gallic enthusiasm and dramatic instinct, declared that she did not believe that this girl was Mrs. Eustis' niece at all. Probably the real niece had gone with her aunt, and this was an impostor. For her part, she was afraid to leave a single piece of jewelry in her room, and she wakened at the slightest noise in the night. Lady Fenton went against the tide in doubting Miss Herford's complicity in the robbery; but would like to know what the girl was doing at such a place, and in such company, and without a chaperon. Lady Mary said nothing. She was not supposed to have an opinion about such a risqué affair; but, when she observed Captain Dunsmere's whole-hearted championship of the American girl, she felt convinced that the worst of the gossip was true.

On the third afternoon of Miss Herford's visit, Penny Seton borrowed one of his host's cars—"For a little run to Buxton on a business matter," he explained. He would probably be back by tea time.

After his departure, the party broke up into groups; but the women did not retreat to their rooms as usual. Even Lady Fenton forswore her afternoon nap, though she did doze fitfully in a chair on the terrace. The other women, all save Pat and Lady Chelmy, who had disappeared, wandered about restlessly, talked absent-mindedly, did fancywork, in a nervous, futile fashion.

"What is the excitement?" Charevoix asked, as he joined his wife, Lady Fenton, and Mrs. Harberton on the terrace, late in the afternoon. "You all seem to be waiting for something."

The women looked at each other, and Madame Charevoix, flushed and uncomfortable, visibly tried to pluck up

courage for speech, and as visibly failed. Mrs. Harberton plunged into the breach.

"Penny has gone to see that road-house landlord again," she said, with a little note of defiance in her tone. Every one knew that the ambassador was crazy about the minx. Frenchmen had no moral sense.

"Oh, he has?" Charevoix's voice and face were unperturbed; but he felt a distinct twinge somewhere about his heart. Poor little girl! Her bad quarter of an hour was at hand.

"Yes; we decided that something must be done. The situation was impossible. If Penny finds things are as we think they are, he will bring the landlord back with him, and we will tell Lady Chelmy the whole story. I feel reproached, bitterly reproached, by my conscience, for leaving her in ignorance so long, but it seemed best to be quite sure."

"Decidedly best," agreed Charevoix dryly. He was wondering what he could do. Warn the girl; perhaps give her a chance to avoid the scene. But he did not know how much of the story was true, what he dared assume without insult to Miss Herford. He was leaning back in his chair, tapping its arms with his slim fingers, the nervous movement belying his sleepy expression, when, as he gazed idly along the terrace, he saw a footman come around a corner of the house, followed by a young man whom the Frenchman did not know. A good-looking young man he was, though Charevoix's quick eyes noted that there were two strips of plaster back of his right ear, and that he carried his left arm oddly, with the hand supported in the buttoned front of his coat.

Lady Fenton raised her lorgnon to look at the newcomer, and dropped it with an exclamation of pleasure.

"Why, Robert! I fancied you were on the Continent with your mother. Mary will be so pleased!"

The young man bowed over her extended hand, and turned to Mrs. Harberton, who greeted him enthusiastically, if less familiarly.

"Madame Charevoix, this is Lord Lyttleton." Lady Fenton spoke as if the fact were important. "Monsieur Charevoix, this boy has been out of England most of the time since you have been over here. He came back at Christmas time, but has not been going about. His father, you remember—"

"I have heard of Lord Lyttleton," and the ambassador spoke the truth. This young man had handled, amazingly well, down in Africa, some difficult matters that older British heads had muddled. He had been talked about in diplomatic circles.

"Where is Mary?" asked Lady Fenton, looking aimlessly about her. Charevoix recalled the fact that, since his father's death, Lord Lyttleton had been one of England's most eligible bachelors, and smiled at the survival of natural instinct, even in somewhat incoherent motherhood.

"I believe she and Captain Dunsmere went for a walk," he said.

Lady Fenton settled back into her chair.

"Yes? Well, they'll be back for tea. Mary is keen about her tea. Robert, we are having the most exciting experience—really most distressing. She's quite pretty, and it's hard on Lady Chelmy, but we feel that we really should—only, of course, one must be sure—and so Penny has motored over—but there's no doubt—though just how far she is involved—"

She left her sentence suspended in the air, and beamed nearsightedly upon the young man, who turned a look of appeal upon Mrs. Harberton.

"It's a shocking business, Lord Lyttleton," that lady said crisply, but with obvious relish. Here was some one who had not heard the story, a new listener.

"There is a Miss Herford visiting here, a young person from America."

Monsieur Charevoix noticed that Lord Lyttleton sat up as if an electric current had been run through him.

"She is supposed to be a niece of Mrs. James Eustis," Mrs. Harberton went on. "Probably she is; but her aunt could not come with her, and it

turns out that the girl isn't at all a proper person."

"Not proper?" echoed Lyttleton.

"That's putting it very mildly."

Mrs. Harberton's tone opened up vistas of crime. "She came in, late Tuesday evening—said she had missed her train, and had motored down with friends; but Penny Seton—you know Penny, don't you?—saw her in a common road house, at five o'clock, with a young man who had just been arrested for robbery. Crying in his arms, she was, and the constable putting handcuffs on the man—a dangerous criminal, the landlord told Penny. He said the girl had been arrested, too; but that may have been a mistake. Still, she did not get here until nine o'clock, and she may have been arrested and escaped, for all we know."

"But, Mrs. Harberton, it's a lie! It's a damnable lie!"

Lord Lyttleton had risen from his chair, white-faced, angry. He made an effort to pull himself together.

"I beg your pardon. Of course, I didn't mean that you had lied. I meant that whoever told the story in the first place lied—and I'll cram his lies down his throat. Penny Seton, was it? The dirty little scoundalmonger! I'll thrash him within an inch of his life!"

Charevoix laid a friendly hand upon the young man's shoulder.

"You aren't well, Lord Lyttleton," he said quietly. "Sit down, and we will talk this matter over."

Lyttleton wiped his forehead, and tried to steady his voice.

"But this is outrageous, sir—abominable! I was with Miss Herford at the White Hart. We stopped there for some tea in the garden—and the arrest was all an asinine mistake—and she wasn't crying in my arms—and there wasn't any question of handcuffs."

The three women were hanging upon his words. Madame Charevoix looked amazed, Lady Fenton relieved, Mrs. Harberton incredulous and suspicious. Charevoix glanced from them to Lyttleton and back again. He was being enormously entertained.

"You may have been with her," Mrs.

Harberton said grimly, when she could find breath, "and the arrest may have been a mistake, but where were you both from five until nine?"

"I had to go over to X— with the constable, and fix up that fool mistake about Lady Ancaster's jewels—they were in her dressing case all the time, by the way—Miss Herford stayed at the inn. The constable and I had a bad smash-up; and, when I didn't turn up within a reasonable time, Miss Herford hired some one to bring her over here."

"Oh!" Mrs. Harberton's lips were in a very straight line, now. "That explains a great deal, Lord Lyttleton; but it does not explain why a young girl was alone with you at a road house, or motoring down from London with you, when neither her aunt nor Lady Chelmy knew of the escapade."

There was venom in the voice. Lyttleton looked at the faces of the three women, and realized that he had bungled things, had compromised the girl instead of entirely clearing her. For a moment, his brain fumbled helplessly. Then he plunged.

"It was unconventional," he said, with disarming boyishness. "I suppose I shouldn't have allowed her to do it; but she had missed her train, and had no one with whom to stay in London; and, since we were engaged, it seemed to me that it would be permissible for me to bring her down and put her in Lady Chelmy's care."

"Engaged!"

Lady Fenton's voice wandered to perilous heights, and stayed there. Mrs. Harberton's face took on a deep red. Madame Charevoix smiled propitiatingly at Lyttleton. And Charevoix, leaning back in his chair, with the tips of his fingers pressed lightly together, regarded Lord Lyttleton with an appreciative and sympathetic smile that held just a hint of skepticism. This was delightful. He did not know when he had been so entertained.

"But, my dear boy!" gasped Lady Fenton, recovering speech. "Such a surprise! Of course, if you are engaged to Miss—Herford— But it

was unwise, Robert. You can see for yourself how it opened the way for misunderstanding. Still, since you are engaged— Well, *I am* surprised. Does any one know?"

"The engagement has not been announced," said Lord Lyttleton; "or, at least, it hadn't until now, mother being at Aix, you know, and—"

"Of course. And to think we were all led so far astray by what Penny said he saw! Well, really—she's very charming, Robert, very. We realized that, even when we— You mustn't feel offended. It did seem queer, now, didn't it? But, fortunately, no one had mentioned the matter to Lord or Lady Chelmy. They seem very fond of her. I'm sure we all will be when—"

"Where is she?" asked Lyttleton, interrupting the trailing apology.

"In the morning room, singing to Lord Fenton." Monsieur Charevoix had a way of knowing where people were. "I'll go with you and remove him."

The two men went away along the terrace, leaving three ordinarily talkative women mute.

"She is charming, Lord Lyttleton," said Charevoix. "You are a fortunate young man."

Lyttleton flushed deeply.

"Have they been very nasty to her?" he asked.

"Oh, no. Or, at least, she hasn't known that they were. Only three days, you know, and Lady Chelmy has been positively human with her, and Lord Fenton and young Dunsmere and I are her devoted slaves. No, she hasn't been made uncomfortable; but I am glad the thing is cleared up. Women—well, you know."

"Damn the old tabbies!" growled Lyttleton savagely.

"Oh, no; don't damn all of them. There's my wife. I should dislike exceedingly having her damned."

"Oh, I say, by Jove, I beg your pardon! I'm rather groggy, what with being a bit weak, and hearing this infernal gossip, and all that sort of thing."

Charevoix nodded amiably.

"Yes, I can understand how you

feel; but the women didn't manufacture the thing. Seton's story was very convincing."

"I'll murder the man."

"I wouldn't. You've settled the affair. If you will take an old man's advice, you will put no emphasis upon it. You see, Miss Herford knows nothing of the absurd misunderstanding. She will be much more comfortable if she never does know."

"That's true," said Lyttleton; but he knew that he would have to tell her the whole miserable story. How else could he justify the lie he had told, the claim he had made?

And, as he asked himself that question, the enormity of the thing he had done arose and smote him. What would she say? What would she do? She would be furious with him. She would be quite capable of denying his story, of telling the exact truth. He had not thought of that possibility when he had said that they were engaged, had thought only of the ugly scandal raging around her, and of a sure way of quieting it. If only she would understand his intention, his motive!

The two men turned into the hall and followed it to the door of the morning room. Pat was singing "Barbara Allen," her sweet voice curling tenderly around the quaint old tune, and Lord Fenton was sitting in a big chair beside the piano, his eyes shut, his lips mutely following the words of the song.

"I knew a girl, fifty years ago, who sang ballads as you do, my dear," he said, when the song ended. "It's not every one who has the voice and the heart for ballad singing. There's Mary, now. She's a good girl, and she's had expensive lessons; but she says English is no language to sing in. Think of that, now!"

The girl, who had swung around on the piano stool, looked past him toward the door, and uttered a little exclamation. Lord Fenton turned his head, and sprang to his feet.

"Why, Bob! God bless us, it's good to see you! Where'd you drop from? You know Miss Herford? Yes, I see you do."

"Fenton, I want to speak to you."

Monsieur Charevoix slipped his arm through the old gentleman's, and firmly led him from the room, without allowing time for protest or rebellion. Outside, in the hall, he explained the high-handed abduction, and with difficulty restrained Lord Fenton from going back to bestow his blessing.

"Didn't I say it was a mare's-nest?" demanded the old gentleman exultantly. "Lyttleton, all the time! And engaged to him! Finest young fellow in England! Came into the title and property last winter, when his father died. Well, by Jove! Isn't it a settler for Penny—gossiping little toad! Come along. Let's go and see how the women are taking it. I'll bet Harberton's wife is biting herself—and Augusta—serves Augusta right. Next time, she'll listen to me. No, she won't; but, at any rate, she knows she's made a fool of herself this time. That's salutary."

Back in the morning room, a young man, divided between joy and alarm, was holding a girl's hand and looking into a pair of very kind brown eyes.

"Are you sure you are well enough to be out?" Pat asked gently. "I was so sorry when I heard, and it was so good of you to go back for me, when you had been badly hurt."

"Oh, that wasn't anything," protested the man, "You see, I was in an awful wax about your being there alone, and not getting down here in time for dinner, and all that. When I found you were gone, it knocked me out a bit. I couldn't know—but Susan relieved my mind. Bless her!"

"And Peter," supplemented Pat.

"Yes, and Peter. Peter's going to drive for me, after this week. He and Susan are going to have one of the new cottages on my place."

Pat clapped her hands softly.

"The dear things! I shall give Susan her outfit."

They were sitting on the window seat now, and, with the sunlight filtering through the mullioned panes, and making a halo of her hair, she was so ravishingly pretty that Lyttleton gulped chokingly. It would be all up with him

when he told her. Why couldn't he have met her in the usual way, and have had a fair chance, instead of being tangled in a web of indiscretion, and mistakes, and misunderstandings, and downright falsehood? Had an innocent transgression of the conventions ever before brought down such an avalanche of disagreeable consequences?

"You know, I am very much ashamed," Pat was saying frankly, an adorable appeal for lenient judgment in her voice and face. "It was all wrong for me to motor down with you; but I wanted so dreadfully to get here, and it wouldn't be quite so bad out home as it is here—though it wouldn't be at all nice, even there—and I didn't realize. I've had a very thorough lesson, and yet I've been let off very easily. If any one had known—it would have been awful. The women here are so—well, you know how they are. I didn't know anybody was quite like that. No wonder English girls are proper. It isn't that they are so good. It's that they are so afraid. One would have to be perfectly abandoned to hurl herself against such a battery as the opinions of women like Mrs. Harberton and Lady Fenton. Thumbs down, every time. I shudder to think what a criminal I'd seem to them if they knew about Tuesday."

Lyttleton braced himself. The thing had to be done. Some one might come in, any moment.

Drops of sweat broke out on his forehead. There was blank dismay in his eyes. Pat looked at him in alarm.

"You're ill," she said. "You weren't well enough to come."

"It isn't that." He took his courage in both hands, and faced the guns. "It's that I've something deucedly unpleasant to tell you. Please try to understand. I'm such a hopeless duffer. I thought—you see, I couldn't have them saying—"

"Saying what?" Pat's tone was sharp. Something unpleasant—and she had felt so safe, so happy!

"Well, when I came in, this afternoon, I found that Penny Seton—that the women—that—Oh, Lord, I can't tell you the rot!"

"Tell me at once."

She was staring at him, great-eyed, surprised, dismayed. Lyttleton floundered on.

"It was the devil's own luck. Penny happened in at the White Hart, when we were all there in the hall, and the landlord told him something, and he made up enough more to hang us both. Confounded ass! He didn't see my face; but he recognized you here, and told Mrs. Harberton, and she told everybody—except Chelmy and his wife. They've all been buzzing their silly heads off, and, of course, the story has been getting worse and worse."

"Did every one believe it?" Pat's voice was steady, but she looked like a hurt child.

"Not the men; except Penny, of course. Penny can be thrashed; but the women—what can one do with women? They told me all about it when I came in. You wouldn't believe what the story has grown to. And I couldn't listen to the stuff; so I lost my head a bit, and said it was all a damned lie, and that I was the man who had been with you, and that the jewel business was all a humbug, and that I went back to X—to settle it, and you hired some one to bring you on over here."

"Didn't they believe it?" the girl asked breathlessly.

"Oh, yes, I guess they believed it, all right enough; but then they said the robbery might be a fake, but that—I can't tell you what Mrs. Harberton said—but it made me see red, and I knew they'd never stop believing it and gossiping about it, and so I told them ——"

He balked at the hurdle.

"Told them what?"

"Told them—please don't be angry! —I told them that you and I were engaged!"

It came out with a desperate spurt, and he dropped back against the cushions to await sentence.

"Engaged! You and I!"

For an instant, amazement made her as limp as he.

"I couldn't think of anything else," Lyttleton said miserably. "My word,

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they *were* nasty! And I knew that, if they thought we were engaged—well, the motoring down and stopping for tea wouldn't seem so bad; and then I'd have a right to stand back of you, and they'd think twice before they'd be disagreeable to any one who could so jolly well snub them later on in the game, and—"

"Oh!" Pat interrupted him.

She was furious. He had known she would be, but the phenomenon was none the less appalling when it came. The "Oh" was eloquent. It held comprehension, and resentment, and mortification, and hot anger, and recklessness.

"They would hound me with their miserable lies, but they would toady to your fiancée? That is beautifully English! Thank Heaven, I'm American! We have our faults, but we aren't snobs, and we don't crawl under a coat of arms to escape injustice. I don't care what the silly old things think—or what they say. I'll tell Lady Chelmy exactly what happened, and I'll go away to-day. I'll go home to Tom. If Tom were here, he'd settle Penny Seton—and you—and everybody!"

She was crying, now, and her voice was choked by undignified snuffles.

"Don't! Please don't!" begged the man. "I'll settle Seton, if you'll let me—and the rest are settled—and you can settle me yourself. I couldn't think of anything else, and it did do the work. You can throw me over, you know, when you leave here; but don't make a scene and rush off. Tom wouldn't want you to. I know he wouldn't. What's the use? It would make things beastly unpleasant for Lady Chelmy, and your aunt would hate it, and you will come nearer getting even with the women by staying on and letting them think you don't know what fools they've been. They're in dead wrong, as it is. Come, now! Just let the thing slide. It's much better as it is."

He was pleading earnestly, and her face showed that she was wavering.

"But pretending that we are engaged! It would be odious!"

Lyttleton winced.

"You'd only have to be a little bit decent to me before the others. I'd make things as easy as I could. I swear I won't take any advantage of the situation—won't bore you, or make love to you."

"I should hope not." Pat was very stern.

"And, when you go away, you can break the engagement."

"You have said that before. Are you afraid I will institute breach-of-promise proceedings?" The young woman was in a very bad humor.

A sudden thought widened her eyes.

"But Alicia!" she exclaimed.

Lyttleton felt the hard-gained ground slipping from beneath his feet. He had forgotten about Alicia. There was nothing for it but to tell the truth.

"There isn't any Alicia," he confessed. "I invented her."

Pat sat speechless, and regarded him with something like grudging admiration.

"What a liar—what a masterly liar you are!" she said, at last.

Lyttleton shook his head modestly.

"It's a new accomplishment. I'd been only a half-hearted, uninspired liar until very recently."

"But why Alicia?"

"I thought she might make you feel more comfortable. You seemed bothered about having accepted my invitation, and I hated to have you bothered, and I thought perhaps Alicia— For a penny, I'd have married myself to her, but I thought of the engagement first."

"You have a habit of inventing engagements."

Pat's voice was severe, but it seemed to him that her sense of humor was struggling under her wrath, and he took heart.

"A form of paranoia," he confessed humbly. Yes, there certainly was a twinkle in the tear-washed brown eyes.

"She had an aquiline nose," said Pat reminiscingly.

"I loathe 'em." His tone was heartfelt, fervent.

And then suddenly the girl laughed.

There was a hysterical note in the laughter; but to Lyttleton the sound came like manna to the starving. He wiped his forehead and drew a long breath.

"But it was horrid of you—atrocious!" She had relapsed into severity. "You knew what a foolish thing I was doing, and I didn't know."

"Yes, but I didn't know you didn't know until after we had started."

"Oh, you thought I was that sort of person?"

Another storm was coming up. There was no such thing as settled weather in all the wide world. The man promptly abased himself.

"No, I didn't!" he protested. "I didn't think at all. A fellow doesn't, when he meets a girl like you. He's incapable of thinking, just at first. He only looks and feels. When I did realize—well, then it seemed best to go ahead; but I did the best I could to atone. I sacrificed myself to an aquiline nose like a hero."

The storm had gone around.

"It's all a mess," said Miss Herford gloomily. "But I suppose it's another case of going ahead. Only, what will your family say?"

"There isn't any. At least, there's only mother."

"Only!" echoed Patricia.

"I mean there's no one here; and mother is in Homburg, or maybe in Aix now. She won't hear of my engagement until after it is off."

"I will put you out of your misery as soon as I hear from Aunt Dee," Pat promised encouragingly.

"There's no hurry." The victim was most cheerful.

"That's nice of you; but I think the whole thing is hateful for you, too. Pleasant thing to have every one think you have been jilted. Are you sure you won't mind frightfully?"

"Mind the talk, you mean? Not a bit of it. But the thing, now, I suppose you couldn't possibly—"

"We will go out and have some tea," interrupted the girl. "There's nothing like diving in all over for taking the chill off."

They went out on the terrace, where all of the house party was congregated; and, as Lady Chelmy saw them coming, she hurried forward, genuine sympathy and interest on her usually cold face.

"My dear, I'm delighted!" she said, kissing Pat. "Your aunt hadn't given me even a hint. Robert, I could wish you were my son. I need a daughter like her."

Pat blushed guiltily. She was such a double-dyed hypocrite. Would she never again in the world feel honest? But blushes were in order, and no one attributed them to guilt. Nor did any one, save Monsieur Charevoix, notice a lack of spontaneous enthusiasm in the girl's acceptance of the congratulations showered upon her.

"Very interesting," he commented to himself. "Very."

Lady Chelmy at once ordered Lord Lyttleton to send for his man and his luggage.

"You must stay with us as long as she is here, Robert. Of course you must. No one at home at Bursley, and Miss Herford with us— It would be absurd for you to go home."

He protested, he invented excuses; but Lord Chelmy came to his wife's aid and refused to accept a refusal. Lyttleton looked helplessly at Pat. Every one looked at her. She accepted the situation, and smiled sweetly, as a loving fiancée should.

"Do stay!" she urged. And he stayed.

After that, life at Chelmy was as full of complications and gossip as ever, but the complications were new ones, and the gossip, though lively, was less virulent.

Miss Patricia Herford, of Wyoming and Chicago, was still the storm center, but with a difference. Whereas, before her engagement to Lord Lyttleton, the storm had rocked her own foundations and threatened her with disaster, she now stood solidly poised, and whipped the atmosphere round about her into tempestuous and electric condition. When she had been good, amiable, well-meaning, friendly,

she had been tried and condemned without a hearing. Very well. Now she would behave as she pleased. Being engaged to a title excused anything up to murder in the first degree. Then the title should be made to fulfill its purpose.

Not that Pat was meditating murder in the first degree. Not at all. She was content with manslaughter; but she was very thorough about that. Captain Dunsmere was the first victim. He went down without a struggle, and Lady Mary, routed, overwhelmed, abandoned botany for cross-stitch and the society of the older women. The next victory was less decisive, but rather more momentous. Pat developed a sudden and absorbing interest in British politics—a very natural thing, considering her brilliant English future, as Lord Chelmy remarked approvingly. Lyttleton must go in for public life. It was his duty; and his fiancée evidently intended to help him cut an important figure.

Who so well fitted to lead the future Lady Lyttleton's footsteps in the right direction, to secure her influence for the Liberal party, as Mr. Harberton, the brains, if not the nominal head, of that party? Lord Chelmy pointed out to Mr. Harberton his plain duty as a savior of England, and the minister embraced his opportunity with a fervor that spoke volumes for his patriotism. He taught Miss Herford the foundation principles of the Liberal policy; he explained the tariff to her; he led her to firm ground on the Irish question; he set her feet on the road to solution of the labor problems.

All this took time; but Miss Herford was prodigal of time, in so good a cause. They talked politics in the music room, on the terrace, in the rose garden. They rode together in the interests of the Liberal party. They walked together for England's salvation. They played tennis, with political interludes between sets. And Mrs. Harberton, called upon to sacrifice her prejudices to the welfare of the party, and met, in moments of conjugal reproach, not by an erring husband, but

by an irreproachable cabinet minister acting under advice from Lord Chelmsly, smiled cloyingly at "dear Miss Herford," and hated her furiously.

"Brazen—absolutely brazen!" she said, to Lady Fenton. "Why Lord Lyttleton allows her to carry on with Captain Dunsmere as he does I can't imagine. Some one should point out to him that her conduct is disgraceful."

But Lady Fenton, though she did love a spicy bit of gossip, and drew the line at jewel robbers, was good-natured, and altogether reconciled to the defection of Captain Dunsmere, whom she did not consider a matrimonial prize.

"Oh, I don't know," she said genially. "She's a dear child. Fenton's in love with her himself—and small blame to him. The men will always be falling in love with her, and Robert may as well make up his mind to that now. He doesn't seem to mind."

But Robert did mind. He minded distressingly, though he made a gallant effort to conceal the fact from the public and from Pat herself, and succeeded.

"The devil's entered into the child," chuckled Lord Fenton, when he and Charevoix discussed the reprehensible performances of their favorite.

"And can you blame her? I've a notion she knew more of what the women were saying, before Lyttleton turned up, and why Penny was called away so suddenly, than we thought she did, and that she's paying off a few scores. There's Mary, now. The way she froze the girl was pretty raw. I couldn't do anything with her. Well, Mary's having time and leisure to think things over. Dunsmere isn't interrupting her. I'm satisfied with that. Not that I'd forbid the banns, you know. He's a decent young fellow, and if he were Chelmsly's heir—but he isn't. Anyway, Miss Pat has him in her pocket—the little imp! And then there's Harberton. Doesn't it do your heart good to see the solemn ass braying politics to her and losing his hard old head about her, and that waspish little wife of his afraid to be disagreeable to the future Lady Lyttleton? But I shouldn't fancy it if

I were Bob. Even if I understood, I shouldn't fancy it at all."

"Lord Lyttleton is afraid to force his luck," said the ambassador.

That was just it. Lyttleton *was* afraid to force his luck. There was luck, of a kind, in being engaged to Patricia Herford, even though the engagement was temporary and nominal. It insured him certain privileges. A mutual desire for *tête-à-têtes* was taken for granted and indulged. He was naturally assigned to his fiancée when their hostess was pairing off her guests. Yes, the situation had its attendant privileges; and Pat, having, in the interests of revenge, recklessly shaken off her scruples against flirting with engaged and married men, even went to the length of flirting with her own fiancé.

There were times when she was so friendly, so gentle, so angel sweet, that he dreamed dreams and saw visions. There were times when she was so enigmatic, so demurely provocative, so bewitching, that he was racked between hope and despair. And there were times when she was so frankly hostile, or so uncompromisingly indifferent, so eager for the end of her visit and for escape from the pretense of engagement, that he gave himself up for lost.

Never was an ordinarily sensible, matter-of-fact, slightly dense, well-meaning, honest-hearted young Briton dragged through more varying emotions, given more irreconcilable and complex impressions, educated more hastily and more thoroughly in the bewildering mutability of the Eternal Feminine than was Lyttleton, in one whirlwind week; but, through all the week's experience, the dazed, but dogged, young man clung to one resolution: He had let the girl in for the scandal in the first place; and he had, with the best of intentions, put her into an utterly false position in the second place. No fellow not an unmitigated bounder would presume upon any concessions the girl might be obliged to make under the circumstances. He had said that he would not make love to her while the supposititious engagement lasted, and he did not. To Pat's

surprise, and to the everlasting credit of the British peerage, he did not.

Gentle, or provocative, or hostile, Pat failed to drive him from that last intrenchment; and gradually it was borne in upon her that, Dunsmere and Harberton evidence to the contrary, there might be something in the contention that "Britons never will be slaves."

She was not only surprised, she was exasperated, even indignant. That day in the garden he had seemed— And when he had met her in the morning room. Not that she wanted the man to fall in love with her; or, if she did, it was only because she so heartily disliked him. When Aunt Dee's letter did come, she wanted to leave him among the dead or wounded on the field of battle. It would be unflattering for him to be as glad as she when the farce was played out. He deserved punishment for inviting her to motor into scandal land with him, and take tea in a roadside garden.

He did deserve punishment, and she had thought that he liked her, that he liked her quite a good deal; but now he was absurdly polite and friendly. She couldn't remember any man under fifty ever having been so polite and friendly to her. She might have been his maiden aunt, for all the inclination toward sentiment he showed when they were together. When circumstances and well-meaning friends prescribed tête-à-têtes for them, the man was cheerfully resigned, even mildly pleased; but a tête-à-tête with Tom would have been as full of emotion. If she was disagreeable, the odious creature was philosophical. If she was kind, he was serenely appreciative. He had no comment to make upon her flirtations. One would think he had not noticed them. He was always at her service, always properly, if not rabidly, devoted in public. He called her "Pat," with private apology, and he had suggested that she would better call him "Bobby" for the benefit of the crowd, though, he added, without resentment, he realized it would be hard for her to do it. She did not find it hard. She even liked it. Bobby was a nice, chummy little name, the

kind of a name she would have liked a real fiancé to have—and it fitted him when he was at his nicest. One could be awful chummy with him, when one could forget that one detested him.

But she would be glad, oh, so glad, when Aunt Dee was ready to meet her in London! And the creature would be glad, too! That was the humiliating part of the thing. He would be as relieved as she—and she had intended him to be miserable. He had been chivalrous, according to his ideas of chivalry. She had to admit that. And he would stick it out; but he always spoke with joyous anticipation of the day when they would be freed from their false position. That was how he encouraged her, tried to cheer her up, when he found her in a depressed mood. It *would* be a relief. Of course it would. She would be delighted—but he needn't be so eager to get rid of her. Probably he was afraid that his mother would hear of the engagement, and have a fit about it, if the thing dragged on too long. Or perhaps he thought that, if he should be very nice to her, she might misunderstand, might harbor false hopes of really being Lady Lyttleton. It was after this last idea occurred to her that she began to be particularly disagreeable to him.

On the second Friday of Pat's Chelmy experience, Lord Lyttleton was called to London on business that could not be postponed. He went at noon, intending to return the following afternoon; and Lord Fenton went with him on business of his own.

An hour later, two telegrams were delivered to Miss Herford. She was lunching when they came; but, feeling a premonition of trouble—two telegrams on Friday!—she went to her room before reading the messages. The first was a cable. It said:

See notice of engagement in London dispatches. What about it? *Tom.*

The second was a telegram from Mrs. Eustis:

Hear through Paris *Herald* and letter from Lady Chelmy of your engagement. What does this mean?

Pat dropped into a chair, stared dizzily at the two innocent-looking bits

of paper, and called down curses upon the telegraph system and upon modern journalism. Chelmy had seemed such a backwater, so far out of the world. She might have realized that somebody would write to somebody else, and that Lord Lyttleton was so abominably important that his engagement would be news, and that the papers—Probably the papers would be sending reporters down to interview her, and take pictures of her!

There was literally no end to this wretched comedy of errors. They must stop the silly thing at once. She would tell him so. They could deny the engagement in the papers, instead of saying that it had been broken. The Chelmy crowd would know, but the rest of the world need not. It would be a horrid thing for him to be publicly put in the position of a jilted lover, just because he had tried to save her from the consequences of being a silly. It hadn't seemed particularly important when only Chelmy opinion was concerned, but to have the thing in all the papers would be awful. She could not allow him to pay so high a price for quieting gossip about her.

She must answer those telegrams at once; but, if she answered them from Padesford, probably every one in the village would know what she had said. She must motor to some other station. If she suggested going alone, everybody would wonder where she was going, and why, and somebody would be sure to insist upon going with her. If she had to have some one with her, it would be better to choose a companion than to have one thrust upon her. She would ask Monsieur Charevoix. He was a dear, and he was so discreet. She had always had a feeling that he did not believe in her engagement, but it was impossible to account for the feeling, for his acceptance of the situation had been perfect. She tore the two telegrams into small pieces, and went down to find Monsieur Charevoix.

He was quite as she had expected him to be. She told him frankly that she wanted to send some telegrams, and

did not care to send them from Padesford, that she wanted him to take her to Buxton. Apparently the thing seemed to him absolutely natural. He showed not a trace of surprise or curiosity, only a quick courtesy and a flash of gratification that she had counted upon him.

"I have an errand of my own in Buxton," he said. "It would be a very great pleasure to have you with me, Miss Herford."

And that was how he put it to the others. He had business at Buxton, and he had invited Miss Herford to motor over with him.

Mrs. Harberton sent a sympathetic glance toward Madame Charevoix; but it slipped harmlessly from the French-woman's serenity. Jealousy was a bourgeois failing. Madame Charevoix had lived it down.

At Buxton, Pat sent two telegrams. One, to Mr. Thomas Herford, the University Club, Chicago, said:

No truth in report. Forget it.

The other, to Mrs. James Eustis, L'Aigle Noir, Wiesbaden, was longer:

All a mistake; but things very uncomfortable. Need you. Meet me at Ritz, Paris, Monday.

Mrs. Eustis would imagine all kinds of things, and worry; Pat realized that. But, if she wasn't worried, she might not leave the dowager; and the dowager did not need her half as much as Pat did.

Aunt Dee's last letter had said that the old lady was not ill—only cross and bored.

On the way back to Chelmy, Monsieur Charevoix's companion was very quiet; but he ignored the fact, and talked enough for two, talked easily, delightfully, and all the while was wondering to whom she had telegraphed, and why.

"Things are going to happen," he said to himself contentedly, as he dressed for dinner. He enjoyed seeing things happen.

And things did happen, with a rush. First, just as the soup was served at dinner that evening, a messenger from

Bursley brought a telegram for Lord Lyttleton.

"You would better open it, Miss Herford," advised Lord Chelmy, to whom it was delivered.

"Oh, I couldn't possibly!"

"It may be something important that should be sent on to him, in London; or it may be something that should be known at once here."

"Please open it yourself, Lord Chelmy."

"I think, my dear," interposed Lady Chelmy, "that Robert would prefer — It is your place, Patricia. I should say that it was your duty."

Every one was looking surprised at the girl's reluctance, and, yielding to pressure, she opened the dispatch and read:

Alicia and I much distressed over report of your engagement. Realize that there must be a mistake; but will expect telegram from you at once.

Pat's face hung out distress signals; but she folded the telegram, and slipped it back into its envelope.

"Nothing of importance," she said lightly. "I will give it to him to-morrow."

When she was alone in the library for a moment after dinner, she read it again. "Alicia and I!" He had said that there was no Alicia; but there was, and she was "distressed." She had good reason to be. The man could not tell the truth. He stumbled from one foolish lie to another. "Realize it must be a mistake." How could they think it was anything else, when he was engaged to Alicia? He, too, had thought that Chelmy was out of the world, that nothing would leak out from there before the muddle could be cleared up. Even so, he would have had trouble explaining to Alicia, and now —

"A telegram for you, Miss Herford."

Pat could have screamed, as the footman handed her the message; but she bit her lips and opened another telegram. It was an answer to the one she had sent her aunt.

Much alarmed. Do be careful. Will be in Paris to-morrow. Come at first moment pos-

sible, or telegraph if you prefer my coming to you.

Pat thought rapidly. She could catch the morning boat. Aunt Dee had telegraphed for her to come to Paris at once. That would be a perfectly good explanation of her hasty departure. She could leave a letter for Lord Lyttleton. Every one would expect her to do that, but she need not see him. She did not want to see him. No wonder he had not made love to her, since he was engaged to Alicia all the time. He had lied about everything, lied to make her feel comfortable—she realized that—but it did not change the fact that the whole thing had been lies, lies, lies, from the moment she had seen him in London, and had pretended that she thought his car was for hire. Somebody ought to make a tract of it. It would scare anybody into a truthful life.

Probably Alicia was scrupulously truthful. Pat detested Alicia, detested her with such whole-hearted vehemence that she hid her hot face against the wing of the chintz-covered chair and cried violently. She detested Bobby, too, and cried some more; but, when the floodgates finally closed, she bathed her eyes, and powdered her face, and went down to find Lady Chelmy. Her eyelids and nose were still pink—she knew that; but every one would think that she had been crying because she had to go away without seeing Bobby, and as for looks—she did not care how she looked. Her vanity was at lowest ebb.

Lady Chelmy's genuine consternation and regret, when she heard the story of the summons to Paris, warmed the cockles of the girl's heart. Lord Chelmy, too, was frankly sorry to lose her. All of the men rallied around her with protest and dismay; but Mrs. Harberton and Lady Mary seemed resigned to the ways of Providence.

"I will say good-by to you all, now," Pat announced. "The train goes at such an unearthly hour that no one must get up to see me off."

There was a chorus of masculine dissent.

"I shall drive to the station with you, Miss Herford," Lord Chelmy's voice was firm, and his wife nodded approval.

"Yes, of course," she said. "What a pity that Robert should be away just to-night! He will be disconsolate. You couldn't telegraph Mrs. Eustis that you must stay over one day longer?"

"Oh, no. Not possibly. Aunt Dee's telegram was most imperative. I don't know just why she wants me; but I mustn't fail to be there to-morrow evening."

Lady Chelmy admitted Mrs. Eustis' claim.

"But it is hard on Robert," she added.

"I will leave a note for him." Pat spoke naturally enough; but it occurred to Monsieur Charevoix, who was studying her face, that the note might make interesting reading.

At any rate, it made difficult writing. Pat worked over it for a long time after her trunks had been packed and her maid dismissed for the night; and, in the end, it covered but half a page. What was the use of multiplying words? The play was ended. She merely thanked him for his courtesy throughout the last act, regretted any embarrassment it might have occasioned him, sympathized with his relief at the ringing down of the curtain, apologized for having opened his telegram at Lord Chelmy's request, hoped that he would consider himself free to make any explanation necessary to his mother and his fiancée, and was very sincerely his, Patricia Herford.

There was a fine rain falling when Lord Chelmy and the departing guest arrived at the station the next morning, and Pat's spirits were as gray as the weather, though she stoutly assured herself that she was delighted to go, to escape from her equivocal position, to turn her back on everything and everybody connected with the experience. She had made up her mind to go home, to go at once. There would be a boat from Cherbourg early in the week, and Aunt Dee would not object to her going; probably she would be relieved.

And Tom would be glad to see her. It was a great comfort to know that dear old Tom would be awfully glad.

"You'd better stay in the carriage until the train comes along, Miss Herford," said Lord Chelmy.

He was standing on the platform in the rain, with the Englishman's disregard of weather conditions, and, as he turned to look for signs of the train, the station master came toward him with a telegram in his hand.

"This has just come for you, Lord Chelmy," he said, with subdued excitement in his voice and a side glance at the girl in the carriage. "I thought you would like to have it at once."

"More telegrams! Pat thanked Heaven that it was not for her.

The old gentleman adjusted his glasses, read the few words, and uttered a muffled exclamation. He smoothed out the paper, read the message again. Then he turned to Pat, with distress and sympathy written plainly on his face.

"My dear young lady—" he began; but he choked, and had to make a fresh start. "My dear Miss Herford, this is bad news. I hate to tell you; but you are the one most concerned. This telegram is from Lord Fenton. He says that—" This time the choking brought him to a full stop. "He—"

Pat leaned toward him from the carriage door, her face white, her eyes full of fright.

"Bobby?" she whispered. She could not force her voice to more than a whisper.

Lord Chelmy nodded.

"He's hurt, badly hurt. They'll have to operate. It's the only chance. Fenton says he is out of his head and keeps calling you. The doctors think you should come."

"Where is he?" Pat's voice was steady now, even a little crisp and hard.

"At Fenton's town house. This is awful, my dear. I'm sorry for you. I'm deucedly sorry. I—"

"When is the first train up?"

He looked at his watch, and turned

to the station master, who had lingered near.

"No train for London before noon, Crimmins?"

"The seven-fifty is late, Lord Chelmy. She'll pass the down train below here, a matter of five or ten minutes, perhaps."

"I'll take that train."

Pat was out of the carriage now. She must do something at once. It was impossible to sit still.

"Please get my ticket, Lord Chelmy, and have the luggage changed."

"But, Miss Herford, you can't go alone. Fenton says for his wife to come up with you. If you will wait until noon——"

"I can't. Don't you see that I can't? He may be dying. They may operate this morning. And he's calling for me. What difference does my going alone make? What difference do any of the foolish things make? They have made too much difference already. I must go, Lord Chelmy. Don't ask me to wait!"

He looked into her face, and something out of his own youth came into his old eyes.

"I'll take you myself, child."

Drawing a notebook from his pocket, he wrote a hasty note to Lady Chelmy, tore out the leaf, and gave it, with Lord Fenton's dispatch, to the footman. The train for the south came in, stopped for a moment, and thundered on. Pat watched it go, without a thought for Paris or for her Aunt Dee. The London train was the only important train in the world. Five minutes later, it came, and the guard found a vacant compartment for the two Paddesford passengers.

"You are very good," Pat said to Lord Chelmy, as he sat down beside her. He patted her arm gently.

"We've all been young once, my dear."

She slipped her hand into his, and left it there. Hearts were queer things. They never did really dry up, after all.

The two sat there hand in hand, as the miles flew by, youth, with its present, and age, with its past, yet somehow

very close at heart. Pat found herself missing the father she could hardly remember. She had always envied girls with mothers, but she had not thought much about fathers. A father might be a great comfort.

"We may find him much better," the old gentleman said encouragingly. "Telegrams always make things seem worse than they are."

She gave him a grateful look, but did not speak. None of the things that were whirling through her brain were things she could talk over with Lord Chelmy. She thought of the letter she had addressed to Lord Lyttleton and left at Chelmy for him, of the aunt who was hurrying to Paris to meet her, of Lady Lyttleton and Alicia; but all those thoughts seemed blurred and unimportant. It was only when she thought of Bobby, desperately ill, suffering, calling for her, that reality crystallized out of chaos.

He wanted her, needed her. Perhaps it was only the freak of a delirious brain that made him call her, but she did not weigh possibilities or probabilities. The doctors had sent for her. Conscious or delirious, he needed her, and she was going to him. Every one would think it was all right, because of the engagement; but, if the cloak of the engagement had not been around her, she would have gone to him just the same.

What were conventions, and gossip, and silly anger, and jealousy, weighed in the scales against death? Alicia could come, if she wanted to. Probably she would come with Lady Lyttleton; but they could not be in London before the next day, and he was calling for her—Pat—not for Alicia.

Perhaps—perhaps— He had looked at her sometimes as if he cared; and, even if he didn't, she did. She was frank with herself, at last. All the pretense and folly of the past two weeks seemed infinitely remote, incredible, absurd. She loved him. She had loved him even in the enchanted garden; but she had been too proud to admit it, even to herself. Now, pride was dead. She did not care who knew

that she loved him. When Alicia came, she would tell her the whole story, and would go away—unless he needed her. No one could drive her away if he needed her. And then, at the thought that, before Alicia could come, he might be past need of any one, Pat gave a stifled little sob, and hid her face against Lord Chelmy's shoulder. The old man's eyes were very soft, below his shaggy, formidable eyebrows.

At eleven o'clock, Pat and her escort were ushered into a drawing-room shrouded in brown holland, and Lord Fenton came forward to meet them.

"He's holding his own," he said quickly, answering the question in the girl's eyes. "I hardly thought you could get the morning train, but I'm glad you did. His mother can't be here before to-morrow. He was run over, you know. Child got in the way of a bus. Bob forgot he was still in bad shape from that motor accident—but it wouldn't have made any difference if he had remembered. He'd have made a try for it, just the same. Child's all right, but Bob—"

He cleared his throat violently, and looked out of the window for a moment.

"The doctors are upstairs. West has the case—and he's the best in England. He says there's a fighting chance."

"Are they—now?"

Pat's lips were dry. Her voice came huskily.

"Oh, no. Not yet—not until after you've seen him. He insisted upon that. They thought it would harm him more to cross him than to wait; but you were to come up at once. His head's quite clear, now. He'll know you. This is hard on you, child, but you'll be brave, I know. You'll have to be brave, you know. I told West you had it in you. He was afraid—but I said he could rely on you."

"He can," said Pat very quietly.

"They'll want you right away, now, I think. I sent word you had come. Don't you think, perhaps— Just something to brace you?"

"No, I don't need it. You needn't worry about me."

A white-clad nurse appeared at the door.

"Doctor West says if Miss Herford—"

Pat went to her, pale, but steady-lipped. The nurse looked at her with appraising and approving eyes.

"He's very low, you know," she said warningly; "but he's conscious. You may do him good, if you don't do him harm."

They went up the stairs to a room where two grave-faced men sat talking, and Pat was vaguely conscious that they came to her and told her that she must be brave. She smiled at them in an unsmiling way.

"You need not worry about me," she said to them, as she had said to Lord Fenton.

The nurse opened a door, and Pat followed her into a room, where a second nurse stood beside a big four-poster bed. She turned, as the door opened, nodded at Pat's companion, and moved a few steps away, as the girl went forward, swiftly, quietly, and stooped over the man on the bed.

"Bobby!" she said.

That was all; but it was enough. Her heart sang in the word. All the sweetness of her was in her eyes and on her lips. The man lying there, broken, helpless, pain-racked, looked up at her, and knew that life was worth a fight.

"Pat," he said weakly, with a little, pain-twisted smile, "Pat, dear, chuck me over—quick—so that I can tell you how I love you."

"He's standing it very well, sir," reported the head nurse to the doctor, in the next room.

The interview lasted only a few moments, and there was little said. Words seemed oddly unnecessary. When the nurse touched Pat upon the arm, the girl rose from where she was kneeling beside the bed, and stood straight and slim and lovely, looking down at the man, and smiling bravely.

"Fight a good fight, Bobby," she said. "I'll be waiting for you."

So swathed in bandages was he, that he could not move even a hand toward

her, but his eyes begged. She bent over him and kissed him.

"They couldn't dynamite me out of a world where such things as that can happen," he said happily. "Don't worry, Pat."

Then came a hideous time, when doctors and nurses were shut in with him behind closed doors, when sickening fear beat at Pat's brain, when every moment held horrors in its clutch, when imagination bred torture; a time of helpless waiting, of desperate, incoherent prayer. She did not see the doctors when they had finished. It was Lord Fenton who brought her word that all had gone well so far.

"You must eat something now," he said. "When he comes out from the ether, he will want you, and you will need all your strength."

She ate what they brought to her, though she did not know what she was eating.

Her face was the first thing he really saw when he came back from the borderland. It was serene and smiling. Her voice was the first thing he heard. It was cheerful and tender. All through the night she sat beside him, while he fought the good fight. She would have it so, and, after watching her for a while, the doctor consented. There were moments when Bobby knew her, and smiled at her out of his pain. There were hours when he raved and even her voice could not quiet him.

"Miss Herford, you *must* go to your room and rest," the nurse said, again and again; but she would not go, and the morning light, creeping wanly in at the windows, found her sitting with her hand in his.

"Sleeping!" said the nurse, as she stooped to look at her patient closely. "That's splendid! Don't move, Miss Herford."

Pat did not move.

At eight o'clock, the doctor came and sent her to bed.

"He's doing wonderfully well," he said, "amazingly well. You've been a great help, Miss Herford, but we will need you again. You must rest now, when you can."

She went toward her room, tired, haggard, numb with exhaustion, but with a great happiness flooding her heart; and, at a turn in the hall, she met Lord Fenton. A frail, sweet-looking woman was clinging to his arm. At her side was a young girl, dressed, like the woman, in mourning. Lord Fenton said something in a low voice. A faint flush came into the woman's face. She stood still for a moment, looking searchingly, suspiciously, into Pat's face. Then she stretched out her hands, with a wavering little smile.

"Oh, my dear!" she cried, with a catch in her voice. "My dear! How dreadful for you! I'm his mother."

In another moment, they were crying in each other's arms. When they could stop crying, Lady Lyttleton kissed the girl's wet cheeks.

"He wrote me you were lovely, but that he hardly dared hope. And they've told me how you came—and how brave you've been. I'm trying not to be jealous. I'm not, now that I've seen you, but when he wrote—well, you know, we mothers. I hope you'll love me, my dear. And this is his little sister, Alicia. He calls her 'Toots.'"

This was Alicia!

Pat stared at the girl for an instant, then made an impulsive little rush, and hugged her.

"You darling!" she said happily. "You blessed darling!"

Alicia looked embarrassed; but Lady Lyttleton smiled approvingly.

"I'm so glad you like children," she said.

The announcement of the Associated Press that a marriage had been arranged between Miss Patricia Herford, of Chicago, niece of Mrs. James Eustis, and Lord Robert Beverly Lyttleton, of Bursley Hall, Kent, was never contradicted; but one day, when Bobby was past the narrows, and his fiancée was sitting beside him—while the nurse considerately turned her back upon the foolish pair—Pat leaned toward her lover, with a hint of the old impishness looking through her new tenderness.

"Bobby," she said laughingly, "are we engaged again—or yet?"

Bill Heenan—Kidnapper



BY WILLIAM SLAVENS MCNUFF

CARIBOU JACK, floundering in the soft snow up to his hips, reached forward and twitched Big Bill Heenan's parka. Heenan turned and glanced back at his partner, dimly seen even at that short distance through the fog of driving snow that encompassed them.

"Got to camp," Caribou yelled above the droning roar of the wind. "All in."

"Stick to it," Heenan bellowed back. "Strike a tamarack swamp soon. Hell in the open here."

He turned and plunged on, wallowing desperately in the soft snow. Caribou swore weakly, shot his teeth clean through his numbed lower lip in a savage effort to rally his failing faculties, and swallowed after him.

Thirty miles ahead of the two furred, desperate, struggling men, lay the little camp of Malchuk, food, and shelter. For two hundred miles back of them was strung out a line of freezing, starving, dying men. There were hundreds of them on that death trail. The bones of a score or more yet lie there. The trail stretched from Malchuk, on Potter's Lake, one hundred and fifty miles from Skagway and the coast, two hundred miles northeast into the Illaniak country—two hundred miles of rolling, sparsely timbered, snow-buried, blizzard-swept, desolate hell. And men died there, in that memorable winter, that the owner and president of a certain steamboat line might add to his wealth. The stampede had been cleverly planned by his agents, and he had

reaped his hoped-for harvest from the hundreds, wintering "below," who had spent their money on his ships on their mad dash into what was first called "the new Klondike," and later "the great steamboat strike."

The news of the new strike had traveled the length and breadth of Alaska as well as all over the United States and Canada, and men had come not only from "outside," but from Dawson, from White Horse, from Fairbanks, from Circle City, and the Iditarod, and even across from Cordova and Valdez, and up from Juneau. They had come to find caches of food planted along the trail, in charge of agents of the company, and for sale at ruinous prices. But the company had not reckoned with the extent of their success, or with the severity and length of the storms that had lashed the stampedes and bound them in camp for days on their mad scramble to the scene of the fake strike. There had not been food enough, and it was the winter when game, in that section, was not.

Storm after storm had roared down from the arctic shores, and buried the venturing argonauts under layer after layer of soft snow, each layer being covered by the next ere it was fit to mush on. The hundreds of scantily provisioned men had lain in their buried tents for day after day, through blizzard after blizzard; had eaten up their small stores, and gone bankrupt to purchase from the keepers of the caches; had consumed that supply, and then,

face to face with the supreme specter of the Northland, had done things that may not be written of.

And now the long, broken line was making its beaten, freezing, starving way back to civilization, aware of the worthlessness of the reported strike, desperate, fighting against savage odds for the lives that had been so freely risked.

Caribou Jack and Big Heenan were in the van of the retreat. Old-timers on many a hard trail, they had passed outfit after outfit; and now, with the last of their dogs gone, with no food save a bit of tea, they were fighting their way back to food and shelter, plunging foot by foot through the engulfing world of snow, stung by the icy venom of the blizzard, blinded by the biting spew of the wind-shot particles, and thirty miles from their goal.

Caribou, lean, whip-thewed, weather-seasoned as he was, was failing fast. Heenan, as always in the face of the great emergency, was sane, quiet, competent, fighting the implacable cruelty of the elements with a courage and a strength as grim, strange, and terrible as the arctic he battled with. Wasting never an ounce of strength, calm, unangered, unafraid, he plugged steadily onward, finding a certain grim peace in the complete use of his terrible energy in the struggle with a worthy foe.

They made a clump of trees at last, found a small creek, and in the lee of an overhanging bank, curled up in their sleeping bags, and slept, as the white breath of the arctic blew over them.

It was clear when Heenan woke. He broke up some dead tamarack branches, boiled a pot of tea, and shook up Caribou.

Jack crawled from his bag stiffly, struggled slowly to his feet, and, after standing erect for a moment, slumped forward on his face in the snow. Heenan poured a tin of the hot tea down his partner's throat, and forced him to his feet once more; and again, unsupported, Caribou fell prone.

"All done, pardner," he whispered weakly, when Heenan rolled him over. "Can't get goin' again. 'S all right.

Can't feel nothin' no more. You can make it. Mush on, Bill. I can go to sleep in two minutes, an' I'll wake up in hell all warm an' cozy."

Heenan, squatted on his heels, eyed him speculatively.

"When yuh get on your feet an' your strength back, you'll take a lickin' from me for ever thinkin' it was any use o' your tellin' me to leave yuh like this," he said dispassionately.

"Good old Bill!" Caribou smiled. "I'm done this trip, pardner, an' yuh can't pull me through."

Heenan squinted thoughtfully at the horizon.

"Mebbe not," he agreed soberly. "We'll have a try at it, anyhow."

He worked Caribou back into his sleeping bag, drew it tight about the helpless man's neck, rove a pack sling around him, and heaved the shapeless bundle on to his broad back.

"Mebbe not," Heenan agreed again, and lunged forward on his desperate journey.

Heenan was unconscious when Sergeant Carter and two constables of the Northwest Mounted found him, two days later, on Otter Creek, three miles out from Malchuk. He still carried Caribou on his bowed back, and he was walking, but he was unconscious. He did not recognize the mounted police when they drove up; in fact, was utterly oblivious of their presence; and weak as he was, it took their combined efforts to force him on to the sledge, where they were compelled to bind him.

But one instinct dominated the big fellow, the instinct to stay on his feet, to keep on moving and fighting whatever obstacle presented itself. He was not making half a mile an hour when they sighted him. He was moving slowly, with short, staggering steps, stopping after each with both feet braced to steady himself, then slowly taking another step of a few inches.

Caribou was in better shape than Heenan. He was conscious, though still too weak to stand. He watched as they strapped the blindly struggling Heenan to the sledge.

"The old — —!" he whispered huskily. "The old — —! He went an' done it. What d'yuh know about him, huh? He went an' done it."

"Didn't land you fellows any too quick," one of the constables assured Caribou, as he tucked him on to a sledge. "She's goin' to come hummin' again in a mighty short while."

She did come humming. It began spitting snow before they had progressed a half mile from where they had overtaken the two starving men, and they drove into Malchuk just as another blizzard blotted the stricken land with its impenetrable white curtain of death.

"Have to lay low till she lets up," the lieutenant at the post said regretfully when the party arrived. "They'll die like dogs in this last one, too. Can't help it. No sense in throwing men's lives away in a swirl like this to get at those that are most like dead already, anyhow. God! It must be awful back on that trail, if these boys are a sample of the best of them. When Bill Heenan and Caribou come in like this, I can build me a nightmare any time thinking what most of the rest of them must look like. It's awful!"

They laid Heenan out on a cot near the stove in the office of the barracks, and forced brandy down his throat. The big fellow opened his eyes, looked about him calmly and sanely, sighted Caribou lying on a cot on the opposite side of the stove, and sighed deeply.

"Gimme another shot o' that," he said, in a steady voice, swung his legs over the side of the cot, and sat up.

The post doctor laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Lie down, my man," he urged soothingly. "You've had a bad experience, but you're all right now. Just lie down and sleep now, and you'll — —"

Heenan laid hold of the doctor's hand and twitched. The doctor gave a howl of pain, and staggered back across the room, nursing a wrenched wrist.

"Don't come pawin' around me like that," Heenan said aggrievedly. "I don't want to lie down. I want somethin' to eat."

He rose steadily to his feet, spread his hands to the glow of the stove, and grinned across at Caribou.

"Whyn't yuh grow up an' get some strength in your bones?" he chided him. "You're a fine guy to mush with! You don't want to take along a pardner when yuh hike; what you need is a pack horse." He turned and glanced around the room. "Where's that feed comin' from?" he inquired petulantly. "I'm hungry."

The lieutenant swore amazedly, and lit a cigarette. The little doctor approached Heenan and shook a finger at him angrily.

"Do you realize that you are very nearly dead?" he demanded. "Do you? Don't you know that you will be lucky if you recover? I never heard of such a thing! Why, man, you haven't had anything to eat for three days, and you——

"That's what I'm kickin' about," Heenan argued back. "Here I mush into camp shy a flock o' feeds, an' yuh all stand around an' yawp at me. What do yuh——"

"Aren't you weak?" the doctor gasped.

"Sure I am," Heenan agreed readily. "I'm hungry. My stomach's all wrapped around my backbone, an' it's draggin' me down somethin' awful. Rustle me a feed somebody, will yuh?"

"Don't bother trying to make his condition conform to any of your ideas of what a normal man should be like after an experience like that, doctor," the lieutenant laughed. "You can't do it, because Heenan isn't normal. There are queer things in this man's land, and he's one of them, that's all. He's akin to the glaciers, and the northern lights, and the river beds up on the mountain tops. He's a part of the North, and no man accustomed to modern civilized humanity has any chance of figuring him out. He'll do anything a moose will, and then some. Tell the cook to set out everything he's got, Jack, and hurry it up."

"He mustn't," the doctor fumed. "He must eat lightly at first, and then——"

"You're goin' to get unpopular with

me, talkin' like that," Heenan interrupted him. "Why, yuh poor little scrub, can't I jam it through your nut that I'm hungry? Hungry, I said. I want a feed."

"Well—well, aren't you sleepy?" the doctor stammered.

Heenan shrugged. "Not a lot," he disclaimed. "I must o' slept some o' late."

"I don't understand it," the little doctor worried. "I don't understand it."

"What do you think of the situation, Heenan?" the lieutenant asked soberly. "The men back on the trail, I mean."

"Dyin' like mosquitoes in a freeze," Heenan answered. "There ain't a man on that trail can come with me, an' I was near done comin' when you people picked me up. Course I had Caribou to pack, an' then some of 'em are better fixed with grub than we were; but they's an awful bunch rammed in there tight, an' they been held up with the blizzards an' all that till they're near through. This last storm'll finish an awful bunch of 'em."

"That man Slattery ought to be hung," the lieutenant declared savagely. "It isn't the first one of these fake strikes he's engineered to boost his steamship graft. He's an old Alaskan himself, too, and he knows what a thing like this may mean."

Heenan shrugged.

"He's out for his," he said. "He's gettin' it. That's all. If some of us get bunked playin' his game, why—it's the game, that's all. He near put me away this trip, but I don't hold it again' him a lot. It's all like playin' poker. A guy bets 'em high when he's got 'em, an' you figure him for a sandy an' call—you lose, see? Yuh got no kick comin', have yuh? No. Same with this. He spreads a bum steer, an' a lot of us fell for it. He gets away with the pot that a bunch of us stand to make up. I don't grudge it to him."

"Men have anted their lives to make this pot up, Heenan," the lieutenant returned grimly.

"I put mine on the table with the rest," Heenan came back. "An' I ain't kickin'. He wins. Let him have it."

"I know, Heenan, but——"

The door flew open and a woman rushed in, clouded with the swirl of driving snow that enveloped her. She wore no coat or hat. The snow lay thick in the disheveled folds of her heavy, dark hair, and her flannel shirt waist and skirt were white with it. She was not above twenty-four, slender, and delicately pretty, with large, dark-blue eyes.

She stood for a moment just inside the door, her small hands crossed over her heaving breast, panting audibly, and peering with frightened eyes from one to another of the men gathered in the room. The lieutenant closed the door after her, and took her by the arm.

"What is it, Mrs. Harris?" he asked gently. "Come, tell me about it."

"My husband——" The girl spoke the word with a great effort, and beat at her breast with her clenched hands. "My husband—my husband——" Suddenly the words came from her lips in a rush of anguish. "They've brought a man in from the new strike. They told me about it. They're dying out there. Oh, God, lieutenant! My husband—out there—in that! He went. You've brought in one of the men who went. He was nearly dead, they told me. Help me, lieutenant! Please, please! Send somebody with me. I'll go. I will. I'll go, but I don't know the way. You'll send some one with me to show me the way? I'll find him, but help me, lieutenant. Help me, please. My Jack's out there in that. He's out there—and he's dying. I know he is." She clutched the lieutenant and shook him fiercely while her voice rose to an agonized scream. "He's out there in that cold and snow, with nothing to eat. He's starving. He's dying. He is, lieutenant. He is. You don't understand. My husband's out there on that trail, and he's dying."

The lieutenant grasped her firmly by the arms and led her toward the stove.

"He'll be all right," he soothed her. "Yes, he will. Now listen to me, Mrs. Harris. Somebody's been exaggerating things. There isn't a great deal of danger. Most of the men out there are

all right. These two we brought in happened to run out of grub, and they——”

“Don't lie to me,” the girl screamed convulsively. “Don't, I tell you. You're wasting time. You can't lie to me. He's my husband, I know. He's dying out there. Just send some one with me to show me the way.”

“No man can travel in this storm, Mrs. Harris. It's impossible. As soon as it lets up——”

“I'll go alone, then. I'll go. I'll find him.”

The woman started for the door. The lieutenant caught her by the arm.

“You can't, Mrs. Harris,” he said, as he struggled with her. “You can't go. You're insane over this thing. Now——”

Suddenly the girl ceased her struggling, and leaned limp for a moment against the lieutenant.

“Hear me!” she said, with painful distinctness, drawing away and looking at him. “You thought I was mad. I'm quite sane now, and quiet, see? I'm perfectly sane. Perfectly. You didn't understand before. It's my husband who's out there, lieutenant. Do you see now? He's my husband. You didn't understand that. You see I must go. Now send some one with me to show me—send some one, send——”

Her grasp of herself slipped, and her soul screamed out of her trembling lips in an incoherent plea for the life of her mate.

The lieutenant, struggling to hold and soothe, was plucked by the shoulder and set aside suddenly, and Heenan stood before the girl, looking down at her. She twined her small hands desperately in his shirt front, and begged on, blindly, insanely. Heenan looked over her head at the lieutenant, with an inquiry in his eyes.

“They live here,” the officer answered. “The Harrises. Jack is a mining engineer for the Rabensteins. Handles their quartz outfit here. Been in about a year. He went on the stampede, all right. He'll go under, I'm afraid. Not very strong, and he don't know the country.”

Heenan picked the girl up by her

shoulders, lifted her tenderly across the room, and, sitting down in the big chair by the stove, forced her to her knees in front of him.

“Look at me,” he said authoritatively. “It's all right. Just look at me and listen.”

Unheeding, the girl raved on.

“Look at me, I say!” Heenan belowed suddenly, in a voice that rattled the kettle on the stove. “Look at me!”

The girl ceased her raving, blinked dazedly like a sleeper suddenly wakened, and then stared steadily up into the big man's compelling eyes.

“Now I know just how it is,” Heenan said gently. “Don't you fret yourself no more. Your man's out there in trouble, an' I'm goin' out there an' get him for yuh, see? I'm goin' to get him an' bring him here to yuh, all safe an' sound.”

He stroked the girl's head gently with his great, rough paw of a hand as he talked, and she laid her little chin on his knee and looked up at him wide-eyed, like a child listening to a fairy story told by its father.

“That—that's it,” she said. “You go and get him for me.”

“I'm goin',” Heenan answered her. “Goin' out there an' get your man an' bring him back here to you. You're not goin' to fuss about this no more, 'cause I'm goin' to get him.”

The girl nodded slightly.

“Yes, you'll get him,” she said, with a little sigh. “You—you see how it is.”

“Sure I do. An' you're goin' to lie down an' get a big, long sleep. Yes, you are. I'm goin' out there an' get him, an' you've got to get a good sleep, an' be all rested up ready to take care of him when I bring him in, cause he's liable to be sick, an' he'll need some nursin', see? Sure yuh do. An' yuh want to be fit to nurse him right. You've wore yourself all out frettin' about him, an' you're goin' to go to sleep now an' be ready to take care o' him when I bring him back.”

“Yes,” the girl whispered. “I'll go to sleep now. You'll bring him back. I couldn't sleep till I saw you, though. You see, they didn't understand——”

"Sure they didn't," Heenan said heartily. "They didn't savvy the play."

He patted her cheek, and she smiled weakly like a weary child. The big fellow stooped and gathered the slight form in his arm. Her tousled, tired head drooped on his shoulder, the eyelids fluttered, and with a faint sigh of relaxation she was fast asleep.

"Bed for her?" Heenan said sharply.

"In here." The lieutenant opened a door.

Heenan rose and carried the girl into the room and laid her gently on a cot. He straightened out her skirts, slipped off her shoes, and tucked the blankets tight around her. The fair, delicate face against the white pillow, the long, dark lashes shading the soft cheek, the lips slightly parted to show the glint of the small white teeth, seemed those of a beautiful child.

"God!" Heenan said softly, and went out.

The cook was setting out a roast and some canned vegetables and fruits when Heenan reentered the big room. The big man sat down at the table, carved off a great chunk of the meat, and poured a cup of coffee.

"Get me a toboggan sledge an' fit her light for a week," he ordered between mouthfuls, as he wolfed down the food. "Get me four good dogs, an'—"

"You're not—" the lieutenant began.

"I am, — — — yuh!" Heenan blazed at him. "Get me the outfit I tell yuh to get while I'm fillin' myself. Get me four dogs, an'—"

"Don't be a fool. No man can find his way in this—"

"I got duck sense," Heenan said shortly. "I'll go any direction I want, blindfold."

"He's right," Caribou put in from his cot. "He's duck wise. He'll go where he wants in any smother."

"But, Heenan—" the lieutenant began again in protest.

Heenan rose angrily.

"Get me that outfit while I'm eatin'," he demanded hotly. "An' don't do no more talkin'. I passed this Jack Harris guy four days back. He was about a

hundred miles out then, an' in bad shape. I powwowed with him a mite an' staked him to half a cup o' flour. He may be livin'. If he is, I'm goin' to get him. A half hour lost may end him. I'm goin' now. Get me that outfit."

"I won't send a man with you, Heenan," the officer said stubbornly. "It's sure death out there to-night if—"

"I don't want a man."

"But I'll go with you myself, Heenan. You—"

"Yuh'd be in my road. I'll have one man to pack back. I don't want two."

A half hour later Heenan stepped out into the blinding snow swirl, slipped the drawstraps of the laden toboggan over his shoulder, and disappeared in the white smother.

"That's the end of him," the lieutenant said sadly, as the men trooped back indoors.

"Aw, hell!" Caribou said disgustedly. "There ain't no end to him. I told him he couldn't pack me in when I played out, but he done it. He's too plumb stubborn to die."

On the morning of the second day after Heenan's departure, the storm ceased, and a party from the camp went out with the mounted police. They came upon Heenan eight miles out. He had what was left of Harris on the toboggan. What was left had life in it, but it was a feeble flicker of the flame. Both of the young fellow's feet were terribly frozen, and he was sinking fast. When the party met them, Heenan rolled up on one of the sledges without a word, and was fast asleep in an instant. He slept the way back to camp, slept while four men lugged him into the barracks and laid him on a cot, and didn't even so much as turn over for the next thirty-six hours. Then he rose long enough to choke down a meal, and without a word to any one, went back to bed and slept the clock around again.

The lieutenant and Caribou were playing solo in the office when Heenan appeared the second time.

"Up for good now?" the officer greeted him, laughing.

"Guess so," Heenan grinned back. "How long I been out?"

Caribou told him.

"Did he live?" Heenan queried.

The young lieutenant's face saddened.

"That's about all," he said slowly. "They had to take off his right leg above the knee, two toes off his left foot, and his right arm below the elbow. Doc says he'll live, but—I almost think it would have been kinder to have let him die."

Heenan shook his head.

"Nope. Not so long's he's got that wife o' his. As long's they's a little finger o' that man o' hers left, it's a kindness to her to keep life in it if yuh can."

"But a cripple like that, Bill—I don't know. His death would hurt her terribly for a time, but she'd get over it, and—But this way, Heenan—to drag along with him year after year like that—"

"Time wouldn't help her," Heenan denied stubbornly. "No, it wouldn't. I know. Some women's like that. Not many, but some. A guy that figures all women are angels, he's an awful boob, but the wise guy that figures none of 'em are, he's worse. He's the big boob o' the herd."

"I think you're right," the lieutenant admitted, with a little touch akin to reverence in his voice. "It's a rotten tragedy either way. They haven't much money, and this is going to go hard with them."

Heenan's small blue eyes narrowed to a scintillant thread between his puckered lids, and the muscles in his great arms and shoulders swelled with a tension of anger.

"If I had Slattery here!" he said venomously, cupping his flexed fingers in front of him. "If I had Slattery here! The overfed, thief-brained, wolf-hearted hell's buzzard! I'd make him blow back with every cent he made out o' this dirty deal, or I'd wring the blood out o' his rotten carcass a drop at a time, till I'd played fifty-fifty with him at a drop for every cent he's made out o' this frame-up. God help Slat-

terry if I ever hook my fingers in his meat, 'cause I won't, an' I'll kill anybody less'n the Almighty that tries to give him a hand!"

"You've changed your tune, Heenan," the lieutenant laughed.

Heenan nodded grimly.

"It's the woman," he explained. "It's the women put right an' wrong in the world. If it wasn't for them, there wouldn't be no such things, no more'n there is with a wolf pack. But the women, they put right in the game an' they put wrong in it, an' the guy that don't deal fair with the rules that give a good woman a square shake in this life game—I want him, that's all." He spread his open hands at arm's length in front of him, and slowly clenched each big fist. "I want him there!" he said.

"I wish you had Slattery there," the lieutenant supplemented. "I'm more or less law and order in this district, and I try to do my duty, but I think I could watch you kill him with a clear conscience, and swear it was done in self-defense, to clear you. We know certainly of twenty-four men who died on that trail, and there are probably others."

"An' some of 'em had women," Heenan muttered; "women that want 'em like that little girl wanted her man. Um! I'm goin' to trot over an' see Mrs. Harris."

The news that Big Bill Heenan was going "below" caused talk in every camp in the North where it was reported. To the friends that he met in Skagway, Juneau, Wrangle, Petersburg, and Ketchikan, on his way down on the boat, he said that he was just going to Seattle to loaf around a little, and look at the sights.

"Been in twenty-nine years altogether, an' fifteen straight without ever havin' been south o' Juneau," he repeated. "An' I want to get outside for a couple o' months an' see what things look like."

It was early in January when he arrived in Seattle. An old friend and trailmate who was filling in time run-

ning a big bank in Seattle, and otherwise increasing the half million dollars he had left the North with, met him at the dock and carried him off to the palatial Northern Club. Scores of the big fellow's friends from the North country were in business in Seattle, and they welcomed him royally. He was featured in the news columns of the papers, wined, dined, and shown off on every possible occasion.

He took it all with a quizzical, half-contemptuous grin, deported himself with reasonable decorum, and whenever he could get away to his sumptuously furnished room at the club, stripped himself to his trousers and undershirt, and lay on the lounge, smoking cigarettes and gazing hungrily out of the window across Elliot Bay to where the jagged outline of the Olympics notched the sky.

He had been in town a little over two weeks when Slattery returned to Seattle from a trip to the East. The two big men met in the billiard room of the Northern Club. Slattery was the fatty degeneration of what had been a powerful man. In fact, he was still powerful, but the flesh on his great frame was an unhealthy pink, and hung on his bulging abdomen in rolls. Big as his shoulders were, his waist was wider. A full roll of double chin further vulgarized a face that was essentially vulgar in spite of a majestic cast of feature. His bulk made even Heenan seem small in comparison, as the two men shook hands, but in Heenan's posture, his every move and gesture, was the suggestion of a live, lithe, fearful power that Slattery's appearance and movements did not express.

"Well, well, well, Heenan!" Slattery greeted him with sonorous patronage, surrendering one fat hand to Heenan's grasp, and patting the big fellow on the shoulder with the other. "My old sour-dough friend! How are you? Why, I haven't seen you since—nineteen hundred and two in Nome, wasn't it?"

"About then," Heenan grinned. "I'm able to eat, thank yuh. You don't look poverty struck or beanfed none."

"I manage to earn my three squares,"

Slattery chuckled. "Never had to miss 'em yet. What brings you down?"

"I blew most o' my bank roll to make up the price o' them three squares yuh speak of, buyin' bum grub from them caches yuh had planted along the trail into the Illaniak country." Heenan came back at him with a grin. "I figured I was gettin' too childish to take care o' my money any longer up in that man's land, an' I come down to get some pointers from you wise crooks that are framin' everything up above these days."

Slattery frowned slightly, and searched Heenan's face intently for a moment. Finding no indication of anything but a game loser having his little joke, he chuckled in appreciation.

"What talk, Bill, what talk!" he chided. "The idea! My caches, you said? Why, what put that idea in your head? And you fell for that Illaniak strike, Bill? Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! That's a good one! The bait must have looked pretty good when you swallowed it, Heenan."

"It's on me, all right," Heenan agreed ruefully. "I figured it for the second Klondike. I thought I'd come down an' see yuh, an' mebbe yuh'd gimme my money back."

Slattery slapped him heartily on the back.

"I'll do better, Bill," he roared. "I'll buy you a drink. Yes, I will. And stake you to the finest banquet the New Bartlett can put up. I will. Let's go hoist one for old time's sake."

Two hours later Slattery hung lovingly on Heenan as they stood before the bar, still ordering drinks for every one in the place and introducing the big fellow to all who came in as the best fellow and the gamest loser that ever came out of the North.

"He fell for that Illaniak strike, an' then he met me an' said, 'I thought I'd come down an' see if you wouldn't give me my money back,'" he explained maudlinly to the crowd. "Just like that. Nothing of the squealer about Heenan. No, sir! When he—"

The local manager of the line of which Slattery was president hurried

into the bar and interrupted his drunken superior.

"You mind your business, or you'll have none to mind," Slattery blatted loudly, after the manager had whispered for a moment in his ear. "And you tell whoever it was that told you I was talking too much, that I'll mind mine. All friends of mine here. This is Heenan. You know Heenan, he—I'm not going home, and I'm not going to shut up. If you're not out of that door in one minute, you'll be out of a job. Go on now."

The manager shrugged and slipped away.

"He's all right, but he don't know his place," Slattery explained grandly.

At a late hour that night Heenan helped Slattery to bed in one of the rooms of the club; later he went to his own room, gathered his belongings, and returned to where Slattery was asleep. He slipped off his shoes and settled himself in a chair by the bedside, eying the besotted sleeper grimly.

The following afternoon Slattery walked into his office, accompanied by Heenan.

"I'm going north to-night on the *Cottage City*," he informed his manager curtly. "Heenan's got a proposition up there I want to look over. I can't tell just when I'll be back."

"Well, where can we reach you by wire in case anything of importance comes up?" the manager inquired.

Slattery hesitated, looked at Heenan, and shrugged.

"I—I don't know," he said uncertainly. "Never mind that."

He picked up a pencil from the manager's desk, toyed idly with it for a moment, and began writing absent-mindedly on the back of an envelope as he stared over the top of the desk out of the window.

"Let's go," Heenan said suddenly, and Slattery jumped. Heenan reached out and carelessly picked up the envelope. "Come on," he said, as he thrust it into his pocket.

"Well—I'll let you—hear from me,"

Slattery said hesitantly over his shoulder to the manager, as he walked out.

The manager stared after him with a puzzled frown.

"I wonder if he's still drunk," he worried. "He walks straight, but somehow— He acts funny. Huh! I won't butt in on him again, that's sure. Let him go his gait."

Outside, Heenan called an automobile and motioned Slattery in.

"Where to, sir?" the driver inquired.

"Any old place," Heenan answered carelessly. "Just drive us out in the country somewhere, and get us back to Pier B in time to get the *Cottage City*. She sails at nine. My friend and I want to talk."

At eight-thirty the machine stopped on Railroad Avenue, before the pier, and Heenan and Slattery got out and went aboard of the boat.

"We're goin' straight to bed," Heenan told the steward. "Show us our room."

Heenan closed the door and locked it when the steward left, and sat down with a sigh of relief.

"I've herded you about long enough," he said. "I want a little rest, an' I'm goin' to get it. An' lemme tell yuh somethin', old-timer—don't try to play that writin' game again, 'cause I won't bother tearin' up your note next time. I'll come shootin' first, an' tend to the note afterward."

He withdrew his right hand from his coat pocket, clutching a blued-steel automatic thirty-eight.

"Get your duds off an' get ready for bed," he ordered. "I'm goin' to put yuh in shape, so's I can walk around a while without worryin' about yuh."

"Will you have a little sense?" Slattery begged wearily, slopping his huge bulk over the lower berth. "You can't possibly get away with this thing, Heenan. Good God, Heenan, you can't kidnap me and keep out of the pen! It can't be done. If you'll just be good now and let me go, I'll give you my word to say nothing about this, and you can go on back North as if nothing had happened. But if you persist in this mad trick of yours, I'll——"

"Don't say anythin' sassy or mean," Heenan warned softly. "Don't yuh go an' do it, Slattery, 'cause yuh ain't fixed right to make talk like that. I been awful near to takin' a pot shot at yuh a couple o' times to-day. It's a long ways through yuh, but I reckon this little popgun'd drill the full distance; an' if I ever start, I'll put seven nice little holes in yuh, right where they'll kill yuh the deadeast. An' yuh know I'll do it, damn yuh!"

"I believe you would," Slattery whispered huskily. "By —, I believe you would!"

"Yuh do more'n believe it; yuh know it. Now get this thing straight. If yuh do get to tip anybody off that yuh ain't travelin' willin', that ain't goin' to help yuh if I'm in shootin' distance. I come near to pluggin' yuh when yuh made that play on the envelope to-day, an' I ain't goin' to let yuh off again. I promise yuh that. The next time yuh even make a try to tip anybody off, I'll get yuh. That goes. From now on, any time yuh try to wise anybody up in any way, you're just committin' suicide. Remember it! Now strip."

"If you'd tell me where you're takin' me or what you want," Slattery whined, as he doffed his clothes, "why I'd —"

"Never mind that," Heenan interrupted. "Strip!"

While Slattery undressed, Heenan opened his satchel and took therefrom a coil of quarter-inch manila.

"Lie down there," he ordered the steamboat man when the latter was ready for bed. "On your face an' put your hands behind yuh."

He started with Slattery's wrists, and bound the huge man securely, hand and foot. Then he rolled him on his back and, with loose ends tied to the rail at the foot and head of the berth, pegged him out till he was unable to move three inches in any direction.

"I can't do it, huh?" he chuckled, as he reached in his grip again and took out several strips of canvas about six inches wide and a yard long. "Open your mouth, old-timer."

"No, no, Heenan, don't do that.

Don't," Slattery begged. "Please! I won't yell. I won't, I promise you. I can't sleep with a gag in my —"

"That ain't bad," Heenan soothed him. "Not half as bad as sleeping in a snow bank with your feet an' legs froze, an' your grub all gone. Not half. Open your mouth!"

He stretched the big fellow's lips wide with one strip of canvas twisted into a gag, and bound another full across his opened mouth.

"Hurt?" he inquired, as he tied them tight.

Slattery nodded as vehemently as he was able, bound as he was. Heenan chuckled.

"Good!" he said cheerfully, and gave the gag an extra yank. "It ain't as bad as havin' your toes took off after they've been froze an' thawed, but I bet it ain't real pleasant at that. Good night. I'm goin' to scout around an' see if they's any friends o' mine on board."

He covered the bound man to the chin, tucked the covers carefully about his neck, and drew the edge of the sheet up until it covered the gag over Slattery's mouth. Any one entering the room would have seen only a sleeping man, well tucked in. He stepped outside and locked the door.

"My friend don't want to be woke up, no matter what happens," he told the steward. "Just keep out o' there, an' see that everybody else does."

There were only a half dozen passengers on the boat, for winter traffic to the North is usually light, and none of these were acquaintances of either Heenan's or Slattery's. Some of the crew commented on how the two men stuck together continually; but it was only idle comment, and their action was ascribed to a close friendship.

At Skagway, Slattery had quite a chat with the agent of his line there—while Heenan sat by. The agent noticed nothing unusual, except that the boss was not looking at his best.

"Been hitting the booze too hard," he thought, and nothing more.

They took the train at Skagway,

crossed the range to White Horse, and there picked up Heenan's outfit. They were in White Horse only two hours. Heenan bought a mushing outfit for Slattery, got his dogs together, and in the early afternoon the two drove out of White Horse, bound for Malchuk. It was forty-eight below when they left.

Slattery stood the pace back of the straining dogs for five long miles before he whimpered. Then his legs gave way beneath him, and he sat in the snow.

"I can't do it, Heenan," he said weakly. "You'll have to let me ride. I'm all out of shape, and I can't keep up."

Heenan slipped his mitten and drew his gun.

"Get up!" he said.

Slattery gasped and struggled to his feet. A mile farther on he commenced to vomit. He cried as he struggled on after the team, and the tears froze on his cheeks. They made eighteen miles that afternoon, and Slattery was fast asleep when Heenan finished his supper and prepared to bind him. The wearied man did not wake even while Heenan passed the ropes about him. In the morning he declared sulkily that he could not rise, and snuggled back in his blankets. Heenan struck the tent over his head and packed it on the sledge.

Then he jerked Slattery out of the blankets, rolled and packed them, and picked up his dog whip.

"Stay where yuh are, then," he said cheerfully. "S'long."

Slattery struggled, staggering, to his feet, a terrible fear on his face.

"Wait, hold on, Heenan!" he cried. "Don't leave me. I couldn't get back now. I—"

"I know damn well yuh couldn't," Heenan returned.

"This is murder, Heenan, pure murder," Slattery whined.

"Somethin' like that," Heenan agreed easily. "Are yuh comin'?"

Slattery choked a sob, nodded, and followed after his torturer on tottering legs that were two sticks of stabbing, heart-stopping pain.

They arrived in Malchuk on the evening of the third day out. Slattery

cried steadily as he wabbled after the team, and babbled incoherent things. He fell every few yards, and each time he dropped he screamed weakly for fear of inability to rise again. Heenan took him to Caribou's shack, put him to bed, and bound him.

An hour after their arrival, the lieutenant of the mounted police knocked at the door of the cabin. Heenan opened it ever so slightly and peeped out.

"I wouldn't come in," he said. "Yuh might see somethin' yuh ought not."

The lieutenant stared in wonder, and Heenan chuckled.

"I think you're more of a man than yuh are a policeman," he judged. "Yuh can think I'm lyin' if yuh want to, but Slattery's lyin' on the bed in here."

"Slattery?" the lieutenant gasped.

"Yuh said yuh'd stand by while I killed him, an' then swear I done it in self-defense," Heenan reminded him. "Don't go back on it."

"Why, what are you going to—"

"What yuh don't know won't hurt yuh," Heenan interrupted. "How's Jack Harris?"

"Getting along all right," the lieutenant stammered. "He—"

"How's the little girl?"

"All right. She— Look here, Heenan, what are you going to—"

"Run along home now, an' leave it to me an' Caribou," Heenan advised. "Whatever's to be done, we'll do it."

The lieutenant stroked his lips thoughtfully.

"I'll do it," he said, with sudden decision. "I don't know anything, and I'm going to take good care not to find anything out. Go ahead, Bill."

"I knew yuh was a man," Heenan complimented him shortly, and shut the door in his face.

In the dark of the early morning Heenan and Caribou mushed out of camp, with the tottering Slattery between them. They were headed east, in the direction of the Illaniak country. The thermometer on the door of Caribou's shack registered sixty-three below zero when they left. Ten miles out, they camped and cooked breakfast.

"Yuh ben askin' what I wanted with yuh all the way up," Heenan told Slattery, as they squatted in the tent after eating. "I'm goin' to tell yuh. They was men died on this trail chasin' the fake stampede yuh framed up. They was others that's crippled for life from travelin' it. All right. The first thing you're goin' to do, you're goin' to travel the same trail they traveled. Mebbe your goin' to die on it, mebbe not, but you're goin' to swallow a good stiff dose o' the same medicine yuh handed out to the poor boobs that fell for that frame-up o' yours an' come this way. There's somethin' else you're goin' to do, but that comes in later. Caribou an' me, we'll-see that yuh travel proper. I can snuff a candle at twenty-five feet with the snapper on this dog whip o' mine, an' any time yuh don't move to suit me— See that lead dog? He was bad when I got him two years ago. I've cut both o' them ears of his off clean down even with his head an eighth of an inch at a time, teachin' him to be good. Get up on your fat legs. We're goin' to strike camp an' go."

They were three weeks on that trail. When they made camp on the back track, thirty miles distant from Malchuk, Slattery was a good sixty pounds lighter than when he left Seattle. The lobe of his right ear was missing, for Heenan's boast of his ability with the whip had not been a vain one.

"We're goin' to hang out at this camp a spell," Heenan told the tortured man when they stopped on the creek thirty miles from home. "You've gone through all yuh could, an' still live to have it hurt yuh as it ought. Whether yuh get out o' this land alive or not is all up to you. I want fifty thousand dollars from yuh, an' if I don't get it, I'm goin' to use my gun to put yuh where a bunch o' good men left this hell trail to go to. You write your check for fifty thousand out to Caribou, an' send a note with it, explainin' that you're buyin' some ground that I brought yuh up here to show yuh. Write it to your manager, an' tell him to keep the proposition under his hat, an' see that Caribou gets the money. You

know how to write it so's it'll sound straight to him, an' it's up to you to make it sound straight. I'm goin' to give Caribou one month to get from here to Seattle, get the cash, and get back again. If he isn't back in that time, I'm goin' to bump yuh off on space an' find out if yuh jobbed us later. If yuh still feel like livin', make that letter awful strong."

That night Caribou munched away for Malchuk alone.

"You'll—hurry, won't you?" Slattery begged meekly as he left.

For twenty-two days, Heenan loafed in the tent with his prisoner, and in all that time spoke no word to him. On the twenty-second day Caribou appeared.

"Like takin' candy from a kid," he exulted. "Got the whole wad in fine, new, thousand-dollar bills. The manager down there said he figured Slattery must be off on some such job as that."

"Fine!" Heenan gloated. "Let's strike this camp an' move. I'm tired layin' around here with this lump o' disease."

A mile from Malchuk, Heenan halted and faced Slattery.

"I'm goin' to let yuh loose," he told him. "You're free from now on to go where yuh please, an' do what yuh please. Yuh think you're goin' to have me pinched, but yuh ain't. If yuh ever do, I'll tell the story o' this little trip just as it's happened. I'll tell how I bluffed yuh out, brought yuh up here, an' made yuh come through. It's a juicy laugh. Yuh been posin' around as a big, bad, bold gazabo ever since yuh went below from Nome, an' the story as I'll spring it'll sound fine to them you've told how awful yuh was. Say nothin', an' I'll do the same. That's all."

He hallooed to his dogs and munched away, leaving Slattery standing, open-mouthed, in the snow. After a little the steamboat man swore and followed him. He was close behind when Heenan pulled up in front of the barracks.

"I want yuh to meet Mr. Slattery, Carter," Heenan greeted the lieutenant, who came out to meet him. "He's

bought a nice piece of ground off me up here a piece."

"Mr. Slattery," the lieutenant acknowledged the sad figure in the rear. "You bought something from Mr. Heenan, eh? Were you satisfied?"

Slattery wet his lips nervously, and made a half dozen fruitless efforts to speak.

"I—yes," he managed at last weakly. "Yes. I think I got—a very good bargain. I'd like to get some one to take me to—White Horse."

"Take Mr. Slattery down to Willets' road house," the lieutenant instructed one of his constables, who was standing in the doorway. "Dan Willets will take you through, Mr. Slattery."

"I—Oh, yes. Thank you," Slattery stammered, and followed the constable away down the one street.

Caribou sat down weakly on his sledge and wiped a bead of cold sweat from his brow.

"My heart'll never be strong again," he declared solemnly. "The nerve o' yuh, Heenan! The nerve! I was as sure he was goin' to blow the game! Say, you an' me'll have to part company, Bill. I got feelin's."

"Blow nothin'!" Heenan scorned. "Fine story for his friends to hear, wouldn't it? That was the last thing I worried about. I'll be back in a few minutes, Carter. Stick around for me; I got a funny yarn to tell yuh about all this. It's rich."

He plodded away down the street to Harris' shack and knocked at the door.

The girl greeted him with the worshipful look of a dog for its master. The delicate face showed fine lines of worry, and the frail body was stooped. In a chair by the stove the crippled husband sat, staring into the fire.

"I wasn't able to thank you when you were in last time, Heenan," he said, in a voice that shook. "They've told me how you went out and got me. I can't say anything adequate, but I'm as thankful as a human being can be, Heenan."

"Aw, that wasn't nothin'," Heenan answered awkwardly. He sat down and twiddled his fur cap nervously.

"I've—I been down to Seattle," he said, after a pause. "I seen Slattery there."

"You—He—he'll do something?" the girl questioned eagerly. "He'll pay us—something—damages?"

"Don't be absurd, honey," Harris said bitterly. "Mr. Slattery's not interested in us. My wife has a most remarkable faith in you, Mr. Heenan. The fact is we are not particularly well fixed, and with me in this shape—The poor girl has had the most obstinate idea that you were going to get damages from Slattery for my condition. I haven't been able to—"

"Slattery ain't a bad guy when yuh get to know him," Heenan interrupted. "He's tricky an' short spoke, but he's real decent when yuh put a thing to him square. I put it up to him right strong—" He stopped to chuckle silently for a moment. "Real strong-like, I told him how things was, an' he—he fished in his parka, drew out a wallet, and slapped fifty crisp thousand-dollar bills on the table—"he come across with fifty thousand to kind o' help make things up to yuh as best he could," he finished, as he rose and settled his cap on his head.

"Heenan," Harris gasped, staring at the bills. "Heenan! Why—" He reached out and gathered his wife in his arms as a rending sob shook him. "It's life, girlie!" he babbled, as the tears came. "We can go back. We can live. Oh, my girl—"

"I'll be trottin'," Heenan said, moving toward the door.

"But, Heenan, wait a moment. I want—I'm so happy I can't talk, Heenan. I—it—"

"Don't try talkin' now," Heenan grinned. "I'll be back later, an' we'll chin it over. One thing—don't never say nothin' to Slattery. Never try to thank him. He's funny that way. Short spoke, but—I'll see yuh later."

He stood still in the snow in front of the door for a moment, winking.

"Damn snow's hurtin' my eyes," he muttered huskily, as he rubbed them with the back of his mitten. "I got to wear goggles for a while."



THEY were young, rich, good looking, and well born, but they were both the children of their age, and very modern and up to date.

They didn't believe in the Bible—they said it was ridiculous; they didn't believe in duty—they said it was stuffy; they didn't believe in children—they said it was wicked to have them; they didn't believe in marriage—they said it was early Victorian; they didn't believe in love—until they met each other. Then it was with them even as it had been with their stuffy old fathers and mothers before them. These glorious young skeptics who believed in nothing suddenly believed in love.

"It's a rotten nuisance believing in love when you don't believe in holy matrimony." So runs Father Noah's great axiom, evolved in the zoölogical fastnesses of the ark. This up-to-date pair of lovers found out the truth of it to their cost.

"If I buy a dress I'm not expected to wear it forever, am I?" said she. "If I take a house and don't like it, it's not considered a crime if I want to move. How can I tell if I want to stick to you for the rest of my natural, till I've tried what it's like? Marriage is simply rotten, but if Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Jones won't call unless a dotty old parson mumbles over us, I suppose I've got to."

"Fish knives and 'The Voice that Breathed O'er Eden' bore me stiff," he

said to her in the intervals of the Russian ballet; "but the piffling old law being what it is, what's a chap to do?"

What, indeed? That was the question. They discussed it through the six eternal weeks of the London season; in the park under the green trees where the sparrows were mating; up the river at Henley between chickens in aspic and iced champagne; at the opera when Nijinsky had finished jumping; in the beautiful old drawing-room in Chelsea, while the good old river flowed down to the bally old sea and Aunt Jane played auction bridge. At last he got a bit fed up discussing it, so he put on a diamond pin and a new silk hat, and called one afternoon to tell her that she must make up her mind.

"Will you or won't you?" he said affably. "It's up to you."

She said that she would under certain conditions.

He sat on the edge of the Chippendale table, swinging his long legs.

"What are they?"

"Love's all right, but it doesn't last long. Sometimes it doesn't hold out till after the honeymoon. We think ours will, but it won't. I've got to protect myself against the coming of that day."

She was just eighteen, this young philosopher, and amazingly pretty. She wore a pink chiffon gown by Paquin and a necklace of pink pearls.

He lighted his cigarette and nodded approvingly.

"Go ahead, old girl! I'm listenin'. I'd like to protect myself, too."

That side of the question had not occurred to her. However, as a belief in perfect equality between the sexes was one of her strongest convictions, she was quite ready for him to consider the matter from his point of view.

She sat down on the cream-brocaded Chesterfield, put a black satin cushion behind her head, and prepared to go into the question properly. She rather believed in black satin cushions as a good background for golden hair.

"I've gone into this thing thoroughly," she said, "and I've come to the conclusion that the best way is to have a contract; a private contract drawn up between our two selves." She paused weightily.

He perceived that he was expected to say something. He promptly said it:

"I say, what a rippin' idea!"

"Isn't it? Like those two American millionaires did. If you're willing, I'd like our contract to be exactly like theirs."

"My dear girl, I'm perfectly willin'. What was their contract like?"

Her delicate eyebrows contracted a little.

"Oh, perfectly splendid! All about what they'd do when they got tired of each other, and he wasn't to interfere if she wanted to leave him; and she wasn't to housekeep if she didn't want to; and they were each to have a day off every month to go where they liked, and a month's holiday from each other twice a year; and they weren't to read each other's letters, or ask who they were from; and all that kind of thing. You know."

"Oh, I know," he hastened to assure her. "So did they, I should think."

She looked at him with the naïve eyes of a child.

"Of course they knew, silly! They'd both been divorced before."

He took out his cigarette case—gold, with his monogram in diamonds, a present from her—and extracted a second cigarette.

"I say, we've not been divorced before." His voice shook with ill-sup-

pressed anxiety. "I s'pose that won't make any dif?"

"Of course it won't." She smiled at him serenely. "Let me give you a match."

She took one from the little match stand beside her—gold incrusted with turquoise, a present from him—and held it to his cigarette.

"Thanks awfully."

He slipped an arm around her, and they kissed—a trifle emotionally for such profound philosophers.

"How about the wedding?"

His face flamed. Hers paled. She gave a little scream, and dropped the match.

"The beastly thing burned me," she said, a little incoherently. Withdrawning herself from his arms, she returned to her seat.

"How'd the end of the month do you?"

"Lucille'd have a fit."

"Then the beginnin' of next?"

"That's the Chelsea Arts ball."

"How about the fifteenth?"

"Oh, don't worry!"

"I'm not worryin' about the wedding. I'm worryin' about gettin' back in time for the birds." He blew a ring of smoke into the air, pausing to admire the artistic effect. "The whole thing's a beast of a nuisance, anyhow."

"Isn't it?" she agreed, with sudden animation. "I'm not sure I can stand for being married at all." She stole a look out of the corners of her eyes at the splendid young manhood of her lover, and her voice changed; "at least, not until— There are heaps of things to be settled first."

"Such as—"

"Well, this contract, for instance. Catch me letting myself in until that's drawn up and signed!"

"I've told you I'm willin' to sign it."

"How can you be willing till you've read what it is?"

"I'd be willin' to sign anythin'" —he nearly said "to get you," but caught himself up in the nick of time—"in reason."

"What do you call in reason?"

"Oh, all those things," he replied

vaguely. "Not openin' one another's letters; havin' a day off; doin' whatever you like; not cuttin' up rough if another chap or girl butts in. That suits me down to the ground, if that's all there is to it. I suppose that is all, isn't it?"

The golden head shifted a little uneasily against the black satin cushion.

"All except about the children," she remarked hastily; "but we've gone into all that already."

"Gone into it, by Jove!" thought he. "I should rather think we have!" Aloud he said: "That's all right. Shall I shove on some more coal?"

"Please."

When he'd shoved it on, he returned to the fray.

"You just draw it up and I'll sign the bally thing."

"Me draw it up!" She sat bolt upright. "Mr. Beddoes must do that."

He jerked his cigarette into the fire behind him.

"Oh, I say, there's no need for that, is there? Can't we fix it up between our two selves?"

"Certainly not. It must be a properly legal document, drawn up and signed before witnesses——" She stopped short. "What are you looking for?"

"My cigarette's gone out. You might chuck me another match."

"There're some on the mantelpiece behind you," she replied severely; "in the little black cat."

With considerable satisfaction she watched him endeavoring to extract one from that intelligent animal's curly and attenuated tail.

There was a sound of a motor hooting, followed by a prolonged knocking at the door.

"Oh, damn!" exclaimed the young man. "I s'pose that's your Aunt Jane?"

"Aunt Jane's not out." She smiled artlessly. "I expect it's Mr. Beddoes come to tea."

"What on earth's he come to tea for?"

"I asked him."

"Great Scott! Why?"

"To tell him about the contract. He's

my guardian as well as my lawyer, you know."

The door opened and the butler appeared, ushering in the lawyer, followed by a footman with tea.

His ward welcomed him with an ardor that put that astute old person immediately on his guard.

"How sweet of you to come, guardy!"

"I should think it is sweet, with half London in my waiting room! What's the matter? Are you going to be married to-morrow, or is your Aunt Jane dying and wanting to alter her will?"

"No business before tea, guardy, darling. I've ordered crumpets specially for you."

"Bother the crumpets!" said Mr. Beddoes.

"Ungrateful old monster! Sit down." He sat down.

Over the crumpet dish he eyed the pair of them grimly.

"I take it you two have made up your minds to get married at last."

"That's about the size of it, sir."

"Under certain conditions, Geoffrey. Don't forget that."

Mr. Beddoes cast a sharp glance over his glasses in her direction.

"What conditions?"
"That's just what we want to tell you. We want them properly drawn up in the form of a contract for both of us to sign."

"Contract?"
"Yes; a real, legal contract that there's no getting out of afterward, stating exactly what we want; and it must be binding on us both."

"Good Lord! Isn't the church service contract enough for you?"

You should have heard the pair of them laugh.

"That stuffy old thing!"
"That was all right for Billy the Conq; but not for us."

"Pray what do you want?"
She jerked her golden head at her lover.

"He'll explain."
In the middle of his explanations the telephone summoned her, and she de-

parted, leaving a fragrance of lilies and violets behind her as she went.

"What damned nonsense is all this?" demanded the lawyer. "Do you mean you're going to sign these idiotic conditions?"

"She won't marry me if I don't, sir."

"Won't marry my foot! I take it you don't mean to keep 'em?"

"Certainly I mean to, sir."

The old man's three separate hairs rose in horror on his venerable head.

"Upon my soul, I don't know what the world's coming to! Conditions indeed! If I were a young man—"

He stopped short. Suddenly a vision arose before him of Mrs. Beddoes, not fat, with a gold transformation and a nose like a parrot, but a slim young thing with an eighteen-inch waist and soft, brown eyes, standing in a country lane full of honeysuckle and wild roses, telling him that she disapproved of port wine, and asking him to sign the pledge.

"Did Mrs. Beddoes make no conditions before *she* married *you*, sir?" said the young man languidly.

Mr. Beddoes, that eminent lawyer whose capacious bosom was said to hold half the secrets of guilty London, turned a lively red.

"All women make conditions before they're married," he grunted.

"Did *you* keep 'em, sir?"

"Of course I kept them." Again he stopped short as a vision presented itself to him of Mrs. Beddoes and himself quarreling like cat and dog as to prices and brands of port and champagne. "I'm not a saint—far from it," he said hastily, "but I did the best I could."

"Exactly, sir." The young man smiled as who should say: "Go to, thou cunning one! I'm another!"

"That's very different, however," said Mr. Beddoes hastily; "a promise made to a pretty girl and a serious thing like this. God forbid such a thing should happen, but if it ever came to a disagreement between you, this contract, as you call it, might be a damned awkward thing for both of you."

"We shan't come to any disagreement, sir."

The old man sighed.

"That's what we all think. But we do. Besides, you've not only yourselves to consider; you've got to consider your children."

"There won't be any children to consider, sir."

"*What!*" shouted the old man. "Is that another condition?"

"The first, sir."

Mr. Beddoes raised his hands to the hand-painted ceiling—cupids disporting themselves, with Venus seated on a rainbow drawn by doves.

"Well," he said helplessly, "I don't know what the world's coming to!" He turned on the young man ferociously. "If you can't stand it without a day off every month; if you're so sick of her before you've got her that you're willing to legislate about her leaving you when she's sick of you; if she's not to keep house, and you're not going to have children, in God's name what do you want to marry her for?"

"Because," said the young man very gently, "she's the only woman in the world I want to be the mother of my son."

"God bless my soul!" said Mr. Beddoes.

There was an artistic pause, during which the young man carefully lighted a third cigarette.

Full of crumpets and twentieth-century wisdom, Mr. Beddoes heaved himself out of his chair.

"Tell her I'll have the contract ready for signature to-morrow."

"Thanks awfully, sir."

The two men shook hands and parted.

Four weeks later, attended by six bridesmaids in pink, and three pages in blue, and assisted by a bishop, two canons, and a curate, the stuffy old prayer-book service—with the word "obey" carefully omitted—made them one.

II.

Wrapped in its parchment envelope, sealed with three great, fat, red seals, the contract reposed among the gold-stoppered bottles and tortoise-shell

brushes in the hundred-guinea mauve suède dressing bag, a present from Aunt Jane. The bride had put it there with her own hands when she went upstairs to change into her apricot charmeuse costume with Bulgarian embroideries, before she came away.

In the specially reserved carriage, furnished like a drawing-room, and decorated with pink and white roses, she showed it to her husband when she opened the bag to take out a clean hand-kerchief.

"I shall always keep it in there. It's a better lock than my jewel case."

"Look out you don't lose the key," murmured that gentleman absently.

The sight of the open bag, with its intimate little fripperies of powder puffs and toothbrushes, had taken some of the color from his handsome face.

"I'll give you the duplicate, in case I do," said the bride.

She pensively dabbed her small nose, and handed him a little gold key. She very kindly snuggled up to him just the least bit, while he put it away.

"Where do you keep yours?"

"Here." He tapped the breast pocket of his new gray suit joyously. "Can't afford to lose that. Bucks you up to know you can put your hand on it at any moment—what?"

The bride, who had been leaning her head on his shoulder, sat bolt upright again.

During the next few days she opened the dressing bag more than once, and took a peep at the document. The legal aspect of the long envelope and the three fat, red seals were a source of much inward satisfaction to her. They were like a reassuring voice.

As time passed, however, the passion of life laid its hand on her, and she gradually omitted the little ceremony, until one day, happening to change her chain with lumps of turquoise for one with blobs of amber, she forgot all about it. She did not even ask her maid the whereabouts of the little gold key.

It was, therefore, a bit of a shock when one morning, after they had been married just under a month, her hus-

band, airily helping himself to bacon and kidneys, asked her what arrangements she was contemplating for the morrow.

She opened her blue eyes at him over the sugar basin.

"Why on earth should I make arrangements for to-morrow?"

"No reason at all, my dear; only it's my day off."

"Is it? And I thought it was the day after. I must have miscounted. Oh, joy!"

The bride, who was pouring out the coffee at the moment, was so overcome with delight that she poured it on the Cluny lace tablecloth instead of into the blue Wedgwood cup.

"I hear there's corkin' fine trout fishin' round the corner." He cast a joyously ruminating eye over the table. "Shove that strawberry jam along, will you?"

She shoved it along.

"Where's round the corner?"

"I'm not breakin' my jaw over bally old Welsh names this mornin', little girl!" He turned the pot upside down on his plate. "I say, you've not left me much. Shove along the honey."

She shoved the honey along.

"How can you go if you don't know the name of the place you're going to?"

"Dawson wrote it down, silly. Took him best part of an hour. If you don't want the car, I'll have it."

"Have it, dear boy. I shall spend my day off having a long, happy day all to myself. I'm simply pining to be alone."

So much did she pine for it that when the great Daimler had disappeared down the drive, she locked herself up in her bedroom and cried herself sick. After which she sat down and wrote to all her dearest friends, telling them how happy she was, and advising them strongly, before getting married, to insist on having contracts, too.

She was stamping the last envelope when the footman brought in the letters. On the silver salver lay four for her, and one for her husband. It was

a queerly shaped gray envelope, with a black "M" surmounted by a gold coronet. Marie was the name of a red-headed lady with green eyes who believed in sex equality, and was given to the merry pastime of annexing other people's husbands. The postmark was Pfeffengwolchichgolthoo, the name of the simple little hamlet that Dawson had written down. The writing was unmistakably feminine, the envelope fragrant with scent.

When her husband returned, troutless, but jubilant, she gave it him. He thanked her with marked cordiality, and put it into his pocket unread.

That night the bride opened her dressing bag, and looked long at the contract. The fat, red seals seemed to worry her. In obedience to her Aunt Jane's urgent request over the telephone, as reported by the bride, they returned to town next day.

Oddly enough, the first thing that she saw on the hall table was a gray envelope with a gold coronet surmounting a black "M." In a fit of absent-mindedness, common to brides both of the Middle Ages and of the twentieth century, she took it upstairs and mislaid it when she went to dress.

Later she overheard her husband inquiring of the butler concerning the vagaries of the London post.

At dinner he inveighed loudly against violent women who attacked pillar boxes, wantonly destroying honest citizens' sacred correspondence. She had the grace to send a thumping donation in cash by a messenger boy the next morning to the head office of the suffragettes.

The days came and went. So did the gray letters. Sometimes the suffragettes got them. Sometimes they didn't. When they did their funds invariably went up.

In the intervals there were wonderful hours—mornings when the birds sang madly in the park, and old London was turned into a magic city paved with gold; afternoons when the gray river turned to molten silver and the beautiful drawing-room was flooded with an ecstasy of light; nights when the moon

danced in the spangled heavens and the stars shouted for pure joy.

These, however, were intervals.

There were days—long days filled with gray letters—in between.

On their second day off, entering a moment late for breakfast, the bride caught her husband kissing a gray envelope. She offered him tea with a voice that would have made the fortune of a refrigerator. Later, she telephoned to a former slave with a pointed mustache and curling black hair, and invited him to dine at her club.

The first people who caught her eye on entering were her husband and the red-headed lady, in a black gown with her bodice under the table, wearing magnificent emeralds to match her emerald eyes. They gave each other the gladsome eye *en passant*, as all happily mated, smart, up-to-date husbands and wives, with contracts in their dressing bags, should.

Toward the end of the third month, Mr. Beddoes returned from Japan. He rang up to inquire after the health of his ward, who was out. Incidentally he asked after the health of the contract.

"How does it work?" he inquired.

"Top hole," responded her husband, who had answered the telephone. "Come and see for yourself."

Mr. Beddoes called that afternoon. On the cream-brocaded Chesterfield, waiting for him, he found an elegant and languid young woman with the placid eyes of a beautiful doll. There were crumpets for his special edification, in a little silver dish, for tea.

After tea he gave her the present that he had brought her from Japan. It was a roll of the finest silk to be bought for money. He told her that it was off a piece that had been manufactured expressly for the young empress' personal use.

"I thought that it might come in useful for something," he said in his stuffy, early-Victorian way.

"Thanks awfully," said she.

She sat with it in her lap all the rest of his visit, fingering it, stroking it, pleating it up in her fingers, as if the

mere feel of it gave her pleasure. Even when he got up to go, she stood in the hall holding it against her breast.

"Are you happy, my child?" the old man asked her.

"You bet!"

"And the contract?"

"Ripping! Thanks awfully for the stuff."

When he had gone, she went upstairs and put away the silk in a bottom drawer. It lay very cozy and white in its soft paper, the little parcel from far-away Japan. She stood for a moment in the gracious twilight considering it. Then she shut the drawer and locked it. Possibly *it* held contracts, too.

That night her Aunt Jane arrived unexpectedly for dinner. She was tremulous with the excitement of a new little niece arrived from Heaven that afternoon.

The pair of them received her great news with a chilling indifference. They were engrossed at the moment with some excellent tomato soup.

"Sweet darling!" murmured the kind lady, beaming at them, spoon in air.

"Why sweet?" demanded her nephew.

"Oh, Geoff! All babies are sweet."

He laughed.

"We don't think they're sweet, do we, old girl?"

"Little beasts!" responded his bride.

Their Aunt Jane looked from one to the other in a kind of helpless perplexity.

"You queer children!" Then she gave a little sigh of relief. "Anyway, Tom's delighted."

"Don't you believe it, Aunt Jane! Good old Tom! He's got another, too, hasn't he?"

"Geoffrey, you *know* they've two!"

"What—*three*? Great Scott! Next thing the poor old chap'll have to give up his car."

His wife looked at him with eyes of horror.

"Geoff, he *couldn't*!"

"Couldn't he!" returned her husband, grinning. "You wait and see! These little luxuries cost money. By Jove, just think of it! Bottles, and prams,

and nurses, and measles, and Harrow, and *boots*!"

"This one won't have to go to Harrow, my dear boy. It's a girl."

"All the worse, Aunt Jane; it'll have to have *frocks*."

"White Indian muslin," said the bride unexpectedly. Her eyes were shining, and her voice was very soft.

"All hand embroidered with teeny, teeny tucks, and little bonnies all drawn chiffon with little pink roses." Her eyes began to sparkle. "I saw some in Peter Robinson's window yesterday —" She stopped short and looked at her husband, who was regarding her derisively. "Ridiculous waste, I call it! I could have got a hat for half the price for myself."

"You stick to the hats, old girl," replied her husband. The butler reappearing at the moment, he lustily demanded champagne.

For the rest of the evening the talk ran on things to eat, auction bridge, and motor cars. When Aunt Jane got up to go, her niece went with her to the door.

The soft moonlight encompassed them lovingly. In her short white frock, with her golden hair in soft curls held by turquoise combs, the bride looked like a little girl.

"Good night, Aunt Jane."

"Good night, child."

Suddenly the bride began to giggle.

"What ho! Buck up, and say 'God bless you!' before you go."

"My dear child!"

If the moon had fallen out of the heavens, Aunt Jane couldn't have been more surprised. Then she caught the look—half mocking, half apprehensive—on the young face. She snatched the exquisite Paquin frock—white chiffon trimmed with red silk cherries—in her arms, and kissed her niece fervently.

"God bless you, my precious child, at all times, in all places! God bless you and yours!"

Her husband, coming out to see his guest to her carriage, caught the last words, and later on, upstairs, asked the cause.

"What was the old girl 'God blessing' about?"

He opened the door between their rooms, when her maid had gone, and stood there in his shirt sleeves, brushing his hair.

"How should *I* know? It's just one of her silly old ways."

"She said, 'God bless you and yours,' I heard her distinctly. What on earth did she mean?"

His wife screamed with laughter.

"*You*, I expect."

"Funny old dame!" He stooped down to the silver mirror, and looked at his parting. "She's a good sort, Aunt Jane. Bit early Victorian, what?"

"I wonder what people really mean by early Victorian? What do *you*, Geoff?"

"Kids, bonnets, church! Stuffy old things like that."

"I'm not so sure bonnets *are* stuffy," said his wife reflectively. "With nice soft tulle strings, for old uns like Aunt Jane, they're not half bad."

"What ho! We shall have *you* going to church next."

"You see me, don't you?" returned his wife scornfully.

She omitted to mention that she had been to service in the Abbey twice that week. The old church, with its stained-glass windows, and the boys' shrill, sweet voices floating upward, the green grass, and the fat, gray pigeons, rather appealed to her artistic sense.

Her husband came forward into the room and looked at her. She made a pretty picture sitting in a low rocking-chair in her white rest gown, with the firelight flickering and flashing from the pink tiles, and the shaded electric lights shedding a rosy glow on her charming face.

A sweet and gracious figure of womanhood! A stuffy old husband of the bygone days, when nobody knew anything, would probably have fallen on his knees before her, and told her so. The up-to-date bridegroom knew a trick worth two of that. He wasn't chucking any bally bouquets. Catch him! He helped himself to some violet oil with considerable satisfaction, and said:

"What are you sittin' there for, old girl? Why don't you get to bed?"

"I'm cold."

"Why cold?" He smacked his brushes together and threw them onto the table. "Had your hot milk?"

She shook her head. "Don't want it."

"Bosh!" He looked round vaguely. "Have those fools forgotten to bring it up?"

"Keep your hair on! I hate the bally stuff."

"What a slacker that woman is! Now *I* shall have to go down and get it. Botheration! I'll get my coat."

He disappeared into his dressing room. There was a banging of wardrobe doors, followed by a vigorous "Damn!"

"What's up?"

"A button off my beastly coat." He reappeared, holding it. "That's the second time that's happened. That woman of yours can't sew for nuts."

"Chuck it over. I'll sew it on for you."

"I see you sewing buttons, what ho!"

"Do you think *I can't*?"

She slipped her hand into a satin bag lying at her side, and took out a little ivory etui containing a little pair of gold scissors, some needles, and a little gold thimble set with little turquoise forget-me-nots.

"Hullo! Where did you get that from?"

"I bought it the other day."

"Fancy *you* having a thimble!"

He resigned the coat to her, put on his dressing gown, and went downstairs.

He was gone a long time. Evidently the milk was hard to find. When his wife had finished sewing on the button, she did not put the coat away, but sat holding it. It was of quilted silk, very soft and very warm. She sat very still, cuddling it up to her. At the sound of her husband's steps outside the door, she started as if she had been a criminal, and let it fall ostentatiously to the ground.

"There's your beastly old coat."

She touched it with the tip of her

satin shoe disdainfully. He picked it up and examined the button.

"Thanks awfully. It isn't even wabbly. I didn't know you knew a needle from a pin."

"I know tons of things you don't know I know."

Sustained by this cryptic assurance, she sipped her hot milk.

"Mind if I smoke?"

"Don't be an ass."

"Got to keep up my end of the contract, you know," he said affably.

She stirred restlessly. He lighted his cigarette.

"By the way, is it O. K. to make Wednesday our day off?"

She looked at him over the edge of her tumbler.

"Got anything special on?"

His smile was that of a man toying with an agreeable thought.

"Quite O. K., thanks! Hope you're fixed up all right?"

"Quite all right, thanks." She took such a gulp of the hot milk that she nearly scalded herself. "I'm going for a nice long drive in the country with Jimmy." Jimmy was the former slave with the pointed mustache and the dark curls. "His new car's simply ripping. I shall start at seven, and I shall not be back till late." She took another gulp of milk. "Quite, quite late."

"Good!" said her husband heartily. "Nor shall I."

When the day came, however, by a most unfortunate coincidence, she was ill. She was cold, she was sick, her throat was sore, her head was on fire. As, however, it is stuffy to have a doctor, she refused to have one in. She lay in bed, in a white lace nighty, with her pearls on and a charming boudoir cap with blue satin rosettes, very delectable to the eye, that made her look like a study by Greuze, and apologized profusely for any inconvenience that she might have caused.

Her husband, who bore up remarkably well considering his disappointment, stayed at home and nursed her. His idea of nursing was apparently to feed the patient up. Trays of hot milk, trays of oysters and champagne, trays

of chocolate, and lots of cream, and little, round, white biscuits with sugar on the top; trays of consommé and toast, followed by fried soles and green peas; and—as the day wore on—trays of grilled cutlets and new potatoes and asparagus, topped by chicken salad and strawberries and cream! When the trays all came down empty, the downstairs people nearly fell down flat.

"Gawd! She ain't got a twist on 'er, I don't think," said the weary housemaid, showing the empty dishes to the cook.

"He can pick a bit, too, by the look of that chicken," snapped the cook, who was herself partial to that class of bird. "Is 'e still settin' by 'er?"

"Ain't stirred the livelong day."

"What are they a-doin' of?" asked the round-eyed scullery maid.

"Jawin' and stuffin'," answered the housemaid shortly. In her last place she had had a tweeny to carry trays upstairs.

"There's no denyin' but that he's very attentive," said the smart parlor maid, looking at herself in the glass. "He puts on the cool when he thinks you're lookin'. But you can't get the door shut before they're 'oldin' 'ands."

"And a good job, too," said the butler stoutly. "In my last place, they 'adn't been tied up a fortnight before they was at it, cat and dog. She was all votes, and 'e was all whisky." He cast an ardent eye at the lady's maid, who was of Parisian extraction. "I 'olds with young couples 'oldin' 'ands."

"Zat is what come of zee contraque," responded the French maid, who had investigated the dressing case. "Ven I come to marry myself, I shall demand zee contraque, too."

The electric bell interrupted their conversation.

Fortified by trays, the patient was about to rise and celebrate her recovery by a little dinner at the Ritz.

III.

With the coming of Christmas came an entreaty from Aunt Jane to spend the beautiful festival with her.

They jeered at the letter together over their bacon and eggs.

"*Beautiful festival,* indeed!"

"Tommyrot, I call it."

"Still, we've got to get through it somehow."

"There's one thing—it'll please the servants to get rid of us."

"I'll save money, too, and I'm hard up."

"It'll be rotten, but the old thing does her best, and we can't afford to offend her."

"I s'pose we've got to go."

They went.

Worn out with squandering money on things that they didn't want to buy, for people who didn't want them, they rushed down at the last minute on Christmas Eve, at the rate of seventy miles an hour, and arrived there just in time to dine.

Aunt Jane had a glorious place in Sussex. It had been in her family for nearly four hundred years. It was one of those absurd old places, built all out of perspective, with little bits added on by each succeeding member of the family according to his individual taste. There were long French windows that wouldn't shut, and little, latticed, diamond-paned windows that stuck when you wanted to open them, and round rose windows that weren't made to open at all.

There was a basement just like a great city, and wide chimneys, in which the wind bellowed like mad on winter nights; and shallow, polished-oak staircases without any carpets, and corridors like young streets; and a park with tame deer, and a kitchen garden with red brick walls, and a Dutch garden, and a terrace with peacocks, and a home farm with silly, white Jersey cows and fussy old hens and fat old pigs and a background of rolling green downs that would have been quite O. K. if they'd been flat enough at the top for golf.

It wasn't half a bad little hole even at Christmas, if Aunt Jane hadn't made such a beast of a fuss.

Aunt Jane, however, believed in Christmas. She believed in plum pud-

dings and mince pies and cards and early dinner, "so that the servants, poor dears, could have theirs in peace."

Quaint thing! She even believed in that old bunkum of peace and good will to all men, to which end she crammed the old house with aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, and cousins who all hated each other with that cordiality that is the distinguishing mark of the twentieth-century family, and set them to decorating, snapdragon, and playing drivelng games.

Worst of all, she believed in making Christmas presents for the people she loved.

"Talk about the early-Christian martyrs!" said he, surveying his hand-knitted waistcoat on Christmas morning. "What about me!"

"How about *me*?" returned his wife, holding up a delicate white silk "cozy." "Great Scott! Listen to this!" She read the legend inscribed on a gilt-edged card, hand painted with fat robins. "For my darling from her old aunt, to protect her precious throat."

"I wonder if the buttons are real gold?"

"You see Aunt Jane using anything else!"

Quite unconscious of the extraordinary tribute that they had paid to her, they dropped the offending garments on the bed.

"I vote we cut this out next Christmas, and hop over to Paris."

"I'm on. I can't stand for this."

"I say, must we put these bally things on?"

"I say, we *can't*!"

They picked them up again, and considered them.

"They're not half bad when you come to look at them."

"Not for an old dame like Aunt Jane."

"I s'pose we'd better stick them on while we're about it."

"I s'pose we must."

They stuck them on, and were very warm and comfortable in consequence—especially the bride, who was addicted to wearing evening dress in the morning—when they turned out en

masse into the bird sanctuary, after an eight o'clock breakfast, to feed the potty birds.

After lunch, gorged with plum pudding and replete with French plums and figs, they were disgustedly subsiding into the fat cushions of an enormous old sofa, when Aunt Jane came in to beg them to go to church.

"I've got to take poor old Mary her soup," she said. "And the dear vicar will be so disappointed if none of the family are there. I know you two dears will love the beautiful walk together."

She beamed on them through her gold spectacles, and rustled away in her soft, gray silk dress.

"Church!"

"Well, that's the last straw!"

"Hang old Mary and her soup!"

"Why can't a bally maid take it?"

"Must we go?"

"I s'pose we've got to."

"We may as well go the whole hog while we're about it."

They heaved themselves out of the sofa, and, grumbling loudly, got into their things and betook themselves to church.

Church was, of course, a back number. They never went, on principle. Needless to say, it bored them stiff. They felt quite queer and youngified when they sat down in the stuffy old family pew. Oddly enough, it took him back to the good old days at Harrow when—grumbling madly, but oh, so happy!—he had plodded to chapel three bally times every Sunday. It made her think of herself—a little, motherless mite in crape flounces—when she had believed that the figures in the stained-glass windows were real angels, and that Aunt Jane's knee was a refuge against all the world.

Lost in reminiscent thought, they sat and stared about them. The decorations were really quite decent for a tuppenny ha'penny affair, and the organ chap seemed quite up to his business. Being a bit fed up with ragtime, they found the hymns quite good.

As for the service, stuffy wasn't the word for it. Still, the old, white-haired

vicar was a good sportsman, and a personal friend of the bally old family's. If he did have to jaw about things no one believed in, after all he was paid to do it, so he wasn't altogether to blame. To show that there was no ill feeling, when the collection came around each surreptitiously popped a sovereign into the plate.

When they came out, it was snowing fast. The ground was all covered with a spotless carpet; the trees were all white. The red glow of the setting sun lit it all up until it sparkled and glittered like diamonds. In the steel-blue sky, shimmering through the rosy radiance, hung the evening star. A little robin sat on a fence and looked at them. It was exactly like one of the bally old Christmas cards in Aunt Jane's scrapbook, which she had shown them the previous night.

Softly, tenderly, over the snow came the sound of young voices singing:

"Unto us a child is born,
Unto us a son is given."

"Good heavens! Those wretched kids are still at it!" said he.

To his surprise, she suddenly stood stock-still, and burst into tears.

"Hullo, dear! What's the matter with you?"

She looked at him.

He looked at her, and understood.

"Great Scott!"

"Geoff! Isn't it *awful*?"

"My hat!"

They stood in the snow and stared at each other, and the evening star and the little robin smiled at them. Then suddenly his face flushed scarlet. He bared his young head and he kissed her.

They wouldn't have believed it, but it was probably the same old kiss that Billy the Conq gave Queen Billy before little Billy Rufus was born.

IV.

Five months later, as he sat in his study one evening, the door opened, and the hospital nurse came in.

"Will you come upstairs a moment, Lord Alistairs? Her ladyship would like to speak to you for a moment."

He turned his head slowly, and looked at her with a sublime indifference.

"Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Her ladyship seems a little troubled. I thought you'd better come up now before she settles down for the night."

"All right; I've some papers to put away first; then I'll come."

He got up languidly, and went over to the writing table against the window, and picked up some papers that were lying there. For all the interest that he showed in the matter, his wife might have been a sack of coals.

The nurse went up the great staircase, lost in admiration. Any show of emotion would have disgusted her. She was a twentieth-century child herself.

Her white gown had barely whisked around the corner before he was up the stairs. He'd have slain the man who said it, but it is a horrible fact that outside the door he stooped down and took off his extraordinarily well-cut evening dress boots.

The beautiful room lay in semidarkness. The nights were still chilly, and a wood fire burned on the open hearth. The little flames flickered joyously on the white furniture and the pink silk cushions, on the gold brushes and the crystal bottles on the dressing table; played at hide and seek on the paneled ceiling; danced gayly over the pink satin counterpane and the lace-trimmed pillows in the great white bed; peeped merrily between the soft muslin curtains of an elaborate, twenty-guinea erection of white lace flounces and pink satin bows that stood sheltered behind a cream silk screen embroidered with pink roses and little gold birds.

In a glass*basin under a soft, pink shade shone a little night light—the same ridiculous contrivance that had served to lighten the darkness of her grandmother and great-grandmother before her. Its little, prehistoric beams radiated as happily upward as if it had been a twentieth-century electric star. There was a smell of violets in the air.

He tiptoed forward and looked down on his wife.

"Feelin' queer?"

The soft white lids opened, and the blue eyes looked up at him. To look into their sparkling depths, one would not have believed it possible that those same eyes had gazed with such steadfast courage into death's eyes only a few hours before.

"I want the key of my dressing bag."

The voice was her voice, serene and languid, yet, in that scented and firelit darkness, it sounded different. It reminded him of the cooing of a dove.

"What on earth for?"

"That's my biz. Give it to me."

"Where is it?"

"You've got it."

"Me?"

"Silly! The duplicate. Don't you remember I gave it to you?"

"I remember." Try as he would, he couldn't help it—his lips trembled. The thought of the day when she had given it to him, and the contrast between then and now, was a bit too acute. The memory of the hell he had gone through forty-eight hours before was still too near for him to be quite himself. "So you did. Where the deuce did I put the thing? You don't want it to-night, do you?"

"Yes, I do; now, at once; this minute!"

"All right; keep your hair on. I'll find it."

"Buck up! You put it on your watch chain."

"So I did. What an ass I am! Here you are."

He held the little gold key out to her, but she shook her head.

"Bring my dressing bag over here, and open it."

To get it, he had to pass the twenty-guinea erection of lace and pink satin. A surreptitious glance showed him the muslin curtains moving softly. He averted his eyes in horror. He found the dressing bag, and put it on a little table beside the bed.

"Now open it."

He opened it.

Inside lay the contract, in its long, white envelope. The three great, fat, red seals winked up at him with their jolly, red eyes.

"Is it the bally old contract you want?"

He picked it up and held it out to her. She shook her head.

"No, look underneath."

He looked.

At the bottom of the bag, neatly tied up with blue ribbon, lay a pile of gray envelopes, with a gold coronet surmounting a black "M."

"Great Scott! Where did you get those?"

"It wasn't the suffragettes stole them. It was me."

"Whatever for?"

The blue eyes suddenly looked fierce and hungry.

"I couldn't help it. I was so——" She stopped short.

"So what?"

She struggled valiantly, but the word would out.

"So horribly jealous of her!" She caught his strong hand between her two little feverish ones. They burned as if they were on fire. "I was a beast, Geoff! It wasn't playing the game. I'm sorry, but I couldn't help it."

"Why on earth didn't you open 'em?"

"That wouldn't have been cricket."

Marveling at the ways of women, he tore open one of the envelopes.

"You little idiot! They weren't from her."

"Not from her?"

He took out the letter and showed it to her. The paper inside was blank.

"Who sent them, then?"

"I did."

"You! Whatever for?"

"To pay you out."

"What for?"

"For that beastly old contract."

"Geoff, did you mind the contract?"

"Did you mind the letters?"

"Silly!"

"Idiot!"

The two philosophers kissed each other madly.

"But where did you get the paper?"

"When she stayed with us for that week-end, I stole it out of her drawer."

"Then you're a suffragette, too!"

They giggled gayly. Then she suddenly put her soft hand over his mouth.

"Hush! You'll wake him!"

The look of terror they both cast at the twenty-guinea erection would have done credit to Macbeth and his lady suddenly confronted by Mr. Sherlock Holmes.

"Oh, Geoff, are you sure it's O. K.?"

"You bet it's O. K.!"

"Take me on your arm, Geoff."

"Wait a tick, old girl! I'll burn these beastly old envelopes first."

"Burn this, too."

She touched the long, white envelope.

"What, the contract! Don't you want it?"

"Want a contract! Me!"

You should have heard the three jolly, fat, red seals laugh as he dropped them into the fire.

"Do you want a contract, Geoff?"

"I do not."

"Do you still keep yours in your pocket?"

"Feel."

"It isn't there. Where is it?"

"In the fire."

"What? Did you burn yours, too?"

"Ages ago."

"Geoff, when did you burn yours?"

He gathered her closer to him, so close that the beating of their two hearts seemed like one.

"You sweet little idiot! What do you think? On our weddin' night, of course!"

At this critical moment came a little sound as of one whimpering.

"Geoff, he's crying."

"Is that him?"

"Of course it's him, stupid! Geoff, he wants me! Give him to me quick!"

"Don't be an ass! I can't."

"You must!"

Driven by the urgency in her voice, he tiptoed into the inclosure of pink roses and little gold birds.

"I say, s'pose I wake it?"

"You mustn't."

"S'pose I drop it?"

"Oh, Geoff, be careful! Put your hand under his head."

"I say, I daren't. I'd better call the nurse."

"No, no, Geoff. It must be *you!*"

He fumbled miserably among the laces. A little thing like a crumpled rose leaf fell softly against his hand. At its touch, a wild, unreasoning wave of passion swept through him. He shook from head to foot.

So this was silly old fatherhood, was it? This sense of rushing ecstasy! This mad elation for no reason whatever! What utter rot it was!

He picked up the soft little bundle, and laid it down by her side. They hardly breathed as they looked at it. They'd have died rather than confess it, but they really were a bit knocked off their perches, and small wonder.

Like God, they had made a man.

The little beast chose this opportune moment to open his eyes and look at them. It is a way little beasts seem to have.

He opened his bally little optics and blinked at them.

His father and mother, gaping with wonder, fell at old Mother Nature's feet, and worshiped her. At the first touch of her dear old hand, wise with the wisdom of eternity, their hearts opened, and love, new born, rushed out of them even as the living water rushed out of the rock when the chosen of God laid his hand upon it, in the wilderness of sand and stone.

The pair—exquisitely unconscious that they had just come in for their divine inheritance—broke into that song

of songs that old Mother Nature loves to hear:

"Oh, Geoff, he's got your funny old nose!"

"Old girl, he's got your silly old eyes. I say, look at the little beggar's hand! Corkin'! What?"

"Geoff, he'll cost tons and tons of money. He'll want bottles."

"And prams."

"And nurses."

"And boots."

"He'll have to go to good old Harrow."

"And enter the army."

"The Guards, even if we have to give up the car to do it."

"What does the old car matter?"

"Oh, Geoff, isn't he *wonderful!*"

"Top hole! What?"

She lay in his arms, and they were as happy and as stuffy as Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They looked into each other's eyes, and laughed the same silly old laugh that the angels have heard since God created the world and saw that it was good.

The living contract—drawn up, signed, and sealed by themselves—whose tiny hands were to hold their souls, binding them together in bands of iron from which there was no escaping—that stuffy miracle of Godhead, who was to teach them the meaning of life and love—scarlet-faced, with no hair to speak of, lay snug among his early-Victorian blankets and snored.



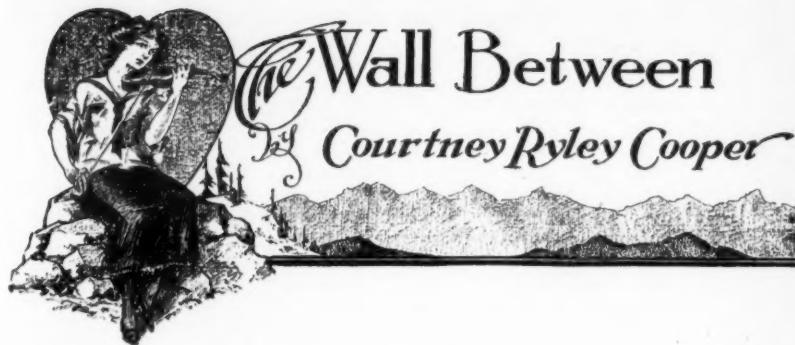
BEAUTY

A SHRED of sunset cloud, a prismy shell,
The lily's urn, the rose's crucible,
Herein lies beauty, with its magic spell.

An autumn leaf afloat upon the wind,
The delicate flush upon the peach's rind,
Herein lies beauty, if ye be not blind.

Glint of a bird's wing, sunlight on the spray,
Deep in love's eyes the tender, answering ray,
Herein lies beauty—cherish it for aye!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



The Wall Between

Courtney Ryley Cooper

HE'D been dropping into the club for a month or two; and so, when I saw him sitting at the little table over by the big window, I just sidles up and says, "Rickey, sir?" just as if he'd sent for me. Some way or other, I'd liked him right from the start; a kind of young fellow, about thirty, I guess, tallishlike and handsome, the kind of man you like to look at—you've seen 'em—eyes that stay right where they're put, and something about him all the way round that seemed clean cut and worth while. So, as I says, seeing him by the little table over at the big window, I sidles up and lays my hand on the back of his chair.

"Rickey, sir?" I says again.

That's what he usually took. But he just looked at me over his shoulder and then turned his eyes out of the window, and they stayed there a long while. Fifth Avenue was just a-humping itself, and you could almost walk on top of the hansom and taxis. I watched the crossing cop a while myself; I always did it a lot in the afternoons; kind of fun to see him handling all them people and vehicles just as if they was a bunch of kids that had to obey orders or be whipped. I watched a while, and then I turned my head down sharp. Mr. Wingate was talking to me.

"George," he'd begun, "I've rather taken a liking to you."

"Thank you, sir," says I, wondering what's up.

"You're a fellow"—he put his hands together like the roof of a house—"that could act as a sort of houseman, and still be a companion to a person. Suppose I should offer to take you on a little trip—would you go?"

"A trip?" I guess I kind of gasped. I hadn't been out of New York for so long that—

"Yes, a little trip out into the mountains—out in Colorado, where we'd be alone in the hills, just the two of us. I'd want you to look after things for me, George, and be a sort of companion—if I got blue. I get that way, every once in a while," he added, with a little smile. Then he turned. "Think you'd like it?"

I guess I was quivering, I don't know; anyway, his eyes got a little bigger as he looked at me. I stammered something about getting him that rickey he hadn't asked for, and hurried away. It'd kind of flustered me—going back to the hills—and I wondered if he knew that was just what I'd been a-wanting for months and years, just what I'd been a-wishing for—the hills with the green of the pines and the purple of the columbine, and— Well, when a fellow's grown up out there, and just kind of gotten used to things, they'll pull and pull on him till they get him back. But I hadn't been able to go before—I'd been afraid to, after what Cripple and Leadville did to me. But now—with him—

Well, when I came back with the

rickey, he was still sitting there, just like I'd left him, just as if he hadn't known I was gone. I spilled a little of the seltzer on the table, I was that nervous, and then I bent over to wipe it up.

"It'll be awful good to go back to the hills," I says. "I'm an old-timer out there, sir, you know. If I'd watched myself instead of bucking faro at Cripple, they'd made something of me, but— It'll be awful good, sir; yes, sir, I'll be glad—"

He looked up quick.

"Then you'll go?"

"Yes, sir," says I, kind of waving my napkin; "yes, sir; it'll be good to—"

He got up then and I stopped, while he pulled a card out of his pocket and got a pencil.

"Where do you live, George?"

"Third Avenue, sir, just off Gramercy, over Joe's place. I never did know the number, but—"

"Better handle your baggage yourself, then, to the Grand Central. I'll get the tickets. Meet me here to-morrow afternoon at five o'clock. Can you get ready by then?"

I grinned foolishlike.

"I could be ready in five minutes—to go back to the hills," says I.

But with it all, I did a little thinking that night, after I'd told the steward and taken my stuff out of the locker, and gone down home. For a long time I just sat up in the window, watching the L trains clank by, and kind of hugged myself to think I was getting away from it all. Then I got quiet and still, and forgot about the rattle of Third Avenue. I was wondering about Mr. Wingate, and where he was going in the hills, and why; and especially why he should want somebody like myself to go along and keep him from being blue. There was a something about it all that I tried a long time to understand; he hadn't told me a thing of the purpose in it all. Maybe—I sat up straight real quick, and my forehead got damp. Then I lumped back in my chair again. No, he wasn't crooked; the thought had gone out of my head just as soon as it had come; it

was something else, something I'd have to wait to find out about. So I gave it up and turned in to my packing.

He was waiting for me at the little table at the club the next day when I got there, and bowed his head a little when I came in. For a while he sat quiet, then turned.

"Get your baggage to the depot all right?" he asks.

"Yes, sir," says I.

"O. K.," he answers.

And a half hour later we were sitting in the car, watching the electric trucks grumbling past us. All of a sudden Mr. Wingate turns to me.

"George," he says, "we might as well settle one little matter right now—while there's still a chance for you to pull out of this thing. We're going out into the hills, where we're going to live I don't know how long. You may not understand everything that happens—but I can't explain to you, until the proper time comes. All I can tell you"—he laughed a little bit—"is that I'm not a highwayman, or a bandit, or a counterfeiter, or a moonshiner. But just the same, I've got to keep things a bit to myself. Are you still willing to take the job?"

I looked at him straight.

"Yes, sir," says I.

I thought about that a lot the first night and day, while we hurried toward St. Louis; I was still thinking about it the next day, while we rushed across Missouri and Kansas; then I forgot it all, when we made the change at Denver, and, instead, just lay back in my seat, thinking of nothing except them hills before me, as we climbed higher and higher to Kremmling. Then we said good-by to the railroad.

I don't remember how long it took us to make that fourteen miles—I was so busy prodding the hind burro, and Mr. Wingate kept so far ahead I couldn't ask him, but by and by we hit away from the trail and straight across the range. I'd kind of thought, when we struck the railroad station and found the burros there all packed with provisions and everything, that Mr. Wingate must have been out here some time be-

fore; but now I knew it, just from the way he picked his path along, and missed the rough spots and found the easy grades. But neither of us said anything, except how pretty the hills were, and how the pines stood, and how green they were, and all that. After a spell we came to a little brook, and Mr. Wingate began to wind up it. A half hour and he stopped, about a hundred yards ahead of me.

"Time for supper, George," he called, and shied a pebble at a chipmunk, "seeing we're here."

And there was a little cabin right before him, laying back in the trees, and looking cozy and comfortable. I whacked old Slowpoke to the house, and stopped, grinning. Then I tied up and commenced unstrapping.

"Ready in three shakes," I says; "that is, if there's a stove inside."

Mr. Wingate smiled, and there was a little twinkle in his eyes.

"I think you'll find everything you need," he says. Then he turned. "Be ready in a half an hour?"

"Yes, sir," says I, and goes inside.

And, sure enough, there was everything I wanted—a little monkey stove like I'd always been used to cooking on, and a pretty good bunch of pans, and dishes, and things. I started the fire and looked around for Mr. Wingate to tell him so. But he wasn't in sight. I kind of looked for him when I went down to the brook for water, but it wasn't no use. I came back to the house and put the coffeepot on, wondering a bit. Then, just for want of something to do, I opened the door in front of me and walked into the other room.

And I'd have given anything not to have done it. Not that there was anything wrong in it—but some way, just from the expression of him sitting there on the big bunk, his hands clenched kind of tight, and his eyes staring 'way off, I knew I'd come in at the wrong time. But just the same, I stayed, standing there in the doorway, looking at the room and at him.

It was big and rough looking, that room, but mighty comfortable and

homely, with it all. Over in one corner I could see an ax, and some snowshoes, and a rifle, all covered with dust like they hadn't been moved for a year or two. The mountain-lion skins on the floor, and the deer head over the big fireplace, looked the same way. It was all rough and mannish—but, just the same, there was another touch about it all that kinda worried me. There was a long bench against the wall, and I picked up a sofa pillow that was a-lying there, and kinda crushed it between my hands, aimlesslike. It was filled with pine tips—I could feel 'em—and men ain't got the patience to gather pine tips. There was something about the pictures on the board wall—cut out of magazines and things—that told me he never put them up there. Then I looked at him, still sitting there, with his eyes straight ahead, and the blood all gone out of his hands, where they clenched, and an old, a suffering something in his face—and then I pretty nigh forgot every promise I'd ever made him. I started forward, then stopped. Mr. Wingate had turned, and was looking at me, trying to smile.

"Want me, George?" he asked.

"I—I just wanted to know if there was anything special you'd like for supper, sir?"

"No—I don't think so—" He got up from the bunk and walked around the room, kinda slowlike, with his hands behind him. "Bacon and eggs will do. Things are pretty dirty here, you see—"

"Yes, sir," says I, by the kitchen door.

"You'd better clean up to-morrow. Dust it all out good, and sweep—" He stopped by the mantel, lifted a little sprig of pine with the cone still clinging to it, and looked hard at it a moment. "But just let these little trinkets lay."

I scraped my foot and bowed against the door a little.

"Yes, sir," says I; "I'll get at it first thing in the morning, sir. I guess the coffee's about boiling. I'd better be getting after them bacon and eggs."

But I guess it wasn't the bacon and

eggs I was thinking about as I cooked them, nor during supper; even though Mr. Wingate did laugh, and joke, and talk, and make fun of the way my hair streaked over my left ear, and plan what good times we was going to have up here, and how glad he was to be back. I'd seen him that way before in the train; and then I'd seen him settle down and stare out of the window for hours—just at nothing. I hadn't known what the cause of it was then, and I didn't now, but I did know it had something to do with the girl that'd helped him put them pictures on the walls, and picked the tips for that sofa pillow. I'm old, and I'm broken a bit—and it's the things that broke me that make me look beneath the surface.

So I laughed with him, but I didn't mean it any more'n he did. And after supper; when he got up from the table, and lit the lamp, and walked into the big room, I didn't say a word, just sneaked around and finished up the dishes as quiet as I could; then put out the kitchen light and went out to sit on the back step. Some way, I knew he didn't want me in there—he was coming back to something and saying howdy to it, and living something all over again—and I didn't have any place there.

So I just sat out on the back porch and looked far across the range, to where the very last streak of sun was dimming into the velvet blue of the night sky, and the long, black lines of hills were sort of rolling into each other, soft, and pretty, and caressinglike. By and by the stars came out stronger and stronger, and I just sat and looked at them, and wondered if I really could touch them from the roof, they seemed so close. Away off somewhere, a night bird began calling, low and lonesome, to the shadows. The breeze came up a bit and rustled the pines, and I leaned back against the door and raised my head to better catch the cool of it, and to wonder again about the stars, the breeze, and the hills—and him inside there, and who it really was he was just a-eating out his heart for. Then—

But I guess I must have dozed a min-

ute, because the next thing I knew, I saw the form of somebody standing in front of me. I jumped up quick and said something—short. I could see him move apologetic and take off his hat.

"Señor Weengate?" he asked, and I caught the Mex in the accent right away. He hesitated a bit, then it came again. "Señor Weengate—I laik to see Señor—"

"*Prontito!*" says I. I used to be good at greaser talk. "Sure, come on."

A minute more and I was back on my step again. Mr. Wingate had welcomed the wrinkled, little old Mexican as if he'd known him all his life. And as for the greaser, there was a sort of dumb love in his eyes that was almost piteous when I let him in there, and closed the door behind him. It was getting almost a little too much for me, and the temptation was strong on me to sneak in and listen. But I knew I had to fight it off—and I got up from the step and started to stumble away from the house.

The moon was coming up over the big range, and I knew there wasn't any chance to get lost; besides, I was following the creek—and I don't guess I would have cared much if there had been. I wanted to get away from the cabin, and get out where the trees, and the hills, and the moon streaming through the branches could talk to me and tell me what to do, and how to go about it. Because, you see, I didn't know just where I stood—I'd promised Mr. Wingate that I wouldn't ask any questions, or try to find out anything, and yet it was just bobbing up in front of me where I couldn't help seeing, and knowing, and wanting to help—in what, I didn't know.

So I walked on, sniffing in the odor of the pines and snorting a little when a low-hanging branch slapped me in the face, stopping now and then to listen to the creek piling over the rocks, then rambling on again, grabbing at the branches of the trees now and then to keep me from slipping, and trying to whistle. But there wasn't much whistle in me.

Suddenly I stopped short, and my

head shot forward. My fingers twitched a bit.

"The wind," I says, and started on.

Then I stopped again. It wasn't the wind, and I knew it. It was somebody a couple of hundred yards ahead, playing a violin, soft, and low, and whispering; no wonder I'd thought at first it was the breeze a-filtering through the pines. I started forward, but the crackling of the twigs drowned the music, so I stopped still and leaned against a dead tree to listen. And somehow I quivered as I listened; it seemed so strange and wonderful away out there in the loneliness, and I just couldn't move until the last note had melted away in the night, and faded into nothing. Then I hurried forward, scrambling over the rocks and crouching under the pines. I heard a bit of a song, and the voice sounded young and girlish. I saw a light show ahead for just a second; it was the opening doorway of a house—then it closed, and all was dark again.

I turned back. Someway, I felt that if I'd gone any nearer, I'd 'a' been breaking my promises to Mr. Wingate. Because I *knew* now—just knew it from instinct—who it was that had picked the pine tips for that sofa pillow, and helped him arrange them pictures on the walls. I didn't look back once; I just wanted to forget the way there, and forget what I'd heard, but I knew I wouldn't. And I knew it all the more when something made me sit down on the back step of our cabin and look at the stars, and the vague outlines of the hills, and keep on playing with the puzzle that wasn't mine to solve. Then I did just as I'd done before—gave it all up and started inside. But as I laid my hand on the knob of the big room's door, I hesitated. Mr. Wingate was saying good night to the Mexican, and there was a huskiness to his voice that hurt me to hear.

"No, Sanchez, all I can do is wait—how long I don't know. It may be tomorrow, and it may be ten years, but whatever it is"—there was almost a glint to the steel determination of his voice now—"I am here to wait until it

comes. Don't forget to give her the little bracelet, Sanchez."

"No, señor."

"And tell her you bought it yourself, you know."

"Si, señor."

"And remember, if anything—no matter what it is—happens, come to me. I've depended on you." His voice sounded a little weary now. "Good night, Sanchez."

"*Buenas noches, señor.*"

And the door closed, while I sneaked to the back step, sat there a long time, and finally came in to the big room, rubbing my eyes like I'd been asleep.

I'd kinda expected him to suspicion me; but no, he never said a word about anything. And he didn't the next morning. Fact is, he woke me up, singing around the place while he looked over his rod and his fly book, and waved to me from the doorway as I pulled on my shoes. An hour, and he came back, his creel empty, but a smile on his face as if it didn't make any difference, anyhow. Somehow, when he smiled that way and tried to act like all the world was good, I'd 'a' done most anything for him, and never cared what it was. And he kept it up.

After breakfast, I wanted to clean the room, but he'd changed his mind now.

"Plenty of time for that," he says. "Come on; we're going to say howdy to the hills."

So all day long we roamed, and he was a lot the gayest of the two, betting me he could eat sandwiches faster, and all that sort of thing when lunch time came. But I noticed we kept all the time up the valley, and never came near that other little cabin on the Silvertip.

That night Sanchez came again, and I heard him say something about the bracelet, and how the little señorita liked it. Then I dozed on the back step a-purpose.

That's the way things went for a week. Mr. Wingate and me wandering the hills and playing like a couple of kids, and him carrying on like there never was a thing like trouble or worries in the world. But every now and

then, when we'd come to an old skid, where ties had been snaked down the hills a long time ago, he'd lose a lot of that laugh, and once in a while he'd stand there a long, long time, his hands deep in his pockets, and his eyes far away over the range to where the lower hills lay all purpled with the heather. And I'd wonder then, and finally manage to do some fool thing that'd bring the laugh back to his lips, and we'd go on again.

Then one day I insisted on cleaning up the room. I hadn't been working long before I piled a bunch of books we'd brought with us out from under his bunk and, sort of curious, looked at 'em as I laid 'em on the table. They were big and heavy, with a lot of funny-sounding names. It kinda got me.

"What's recollective disassociation, Mr. Wingate," says I, looking at one of the titles.

His smile got a bit drawn.

"I'll give you a lesson in psychology some time, and then you'll understand," he says, and, not knowing why, I begged his pardon. It'd made things worse for me, and no reason either. I just couldn't understand, I guess, why *everything* should be beyond me, and it worried me, lots.

That afternoon, Mr. Wingate went out a-rambling, and, just like a thief, I sneaked back into the room to read them books. I had to! But he'd put them some place where I couldn't find them—and everything just piled up on me again without my knowing why.

And it kept on piling. The eggs wasn't right that night, and neither was the popovers, and I kinda fretted when Mr. Wingate joked me about cooking like a new bride. After supper, I just let the dishes stand, and hurried out into the hills. I was a-trying to make up my mind to something, but I didn't know what it was.

The dark had come early. There hadn't been much of a sunset—too many clouds, I guess—but it didn't make much difference to me, anyway. I just stumbled along, not paying much attention where I went; I was too busy trying to figure the whole

thing out, and trying to find a way to help him in whatever it was without breaking my promise.

So I went on and on. Once or twice I fell—and then I stopped right where I stood, just as I had that first night in the hills. It was the violin again, off somewhere to the right, where the big rocks tumbled and piled themselves high against the side of the hill. For just a second I listened, and my hands gripped. The moon had come out for a moment from behind the hurrying clouds, and I could see her sitting there on the great ledge of rock, her violin to her chin, her head bowed, and the bow moving across the strings like every note was drawn out just by the softness of its caress. I looked, and then I tried to turn my back on it. But I couldn't. And almost before I knew it, I was tiptoeing up the big ledge.

I was almost beside her before she heard me; then the bow left the strings sharp, and she jumped to her feet, facing me, a bright, wavy-haired little creature of the hills, all the prettier, all the sweeter, for the lights and shades of the moonbeams. There came a little gasp—her hands went out as if to seek the protection of the big ledge—then she stopped and waited. I'd taken off my hat, and was twisting it in both hands.

"I hope I ain't scared you," I says to begin with; "honest I do. I wouldn't hurt nobody—I'm a neighbor," I says.

She laughed a little, and moved out a bit from the shadows. I guess she knew I wouldn't harm a rabbit.

"I didn't know we had any neighbors but one," she says at last. "Sanchez and I have had the hills pretty much to ourselves. Sanchez is my servant, you know," she added, just as if she ought to explain.

But I was quiet right then, stunned by the beauty of her. It'd been just a glance before; now it was realization. I remember, back in the club on dull afternoons, I used to look out of the window and dream about queens and things, and wonder what they looked like, and if they really was as pretty as the papers said. But now, standing

there on the big ledge in the moonlight, them dreams just went into nothing, and I knew I'd not care any more if I never saw a queen. And it wasn't anything particular—just the way the glint came into her big, deep eyes, when she turned to the moonlight, just the lips and the little curl to them—

I stammered a minute, and then I risked a step or two closer.

"I heard you playing," I begins, "and I couldn't help coming down. You don't mind, do you? You wouldn't mind if I asked you to play again?"

She laughed at the way I said it, and the tones came back from the shelter of the ledge. For just a second she stood and looked at me. Then she raised the violin.

And as she played, I just sank down at her feet and clasped my hands, and wished I could always have as good thoughts and be as anxious to help people and do right as I was just then. Someway or other, music kinda pulls the selfishness all out of a fellow; I'd a given her and Mr. Wingate my life right then if I'd known it'd make 'em happy, if it'd take down that stone wall between them—and I knew there was one. I kinda rubbed my eyes when she got through.

"I—I wish I knew you real well," I says, "like—well, like Mr. Wingate."

"Mr. Wingate?" There came a sharp little note into her voice. "But I don't want him to know me well. I don't like for him to be with me. I told him so. And"—she turned her eyes on me hard—"he just looks at me and asks if I can't remember."

I looked up.

"Can't remember?"

"But I can't." Her face had gone wistful now. "I wish I could—but it won't come to me. There's something—I don't like him now—and still Sanchez says I used to love—"

She stopped short, like she'd said too much, and, while I stared at her, wondering what it all meant, she turned, and before I could stop her, she was gone.

Someway I got back to the cabin. I walked into the big room, and never a

look did I give Mr. Wingate—I couldn't. I just got out my clothes, piece by piece, and began jamming them in my kit. There came a little roll of thunder, and I found myself wondering, anxiouslike, whether she'd gotten safe home. At last I straightened and drew my breath deep.

"Mr. Wingate," I begins, "I'm going back in the morning."

"Going back?" He looked up from one of those big books. "You're not lonesome?"

"No, sir," I says, "I ain't lonesome. Only—only I just can't keep my promise, that's all."

He closed the book slowlike, and put it on the floor. Then he walked to me and laid one hand on my shoulder; I wondered just what the look in his eyes meant.

"So you've found out?" he said, after a long time.

I tried to smile.

"It's what I ain't found out, Mr. Wingate," I answers him, and all unbeknownst I reached out and grasped his one free hand, tight. "It's what I ain't found out, and what I'm a-wishing and a-wishing to know that's sending me back. I—I ain't just curious, honest, Mr. Wingate. I know it's something you're a-fighting out, all by yourself—something between you and that little girl down in the other cabin. And here I am, just worthless to you, just—"

It thundered again then, and I was kinda glad; it saved me from keeping on with what I was trying to say. And someway, he seemed to understand. For just a second or so there wasn't a movement in his body; then I felt his fingers grip a little tighter.

"Suppose—" he said, then stopped, as if he was trying to make up his mind to something. When he began again, he seemed to have forgotten that I'd ever promised him anything, that I was only his manservant and his cook. His teeth bit his lower lip for one quivering second, then he turned away a little and looked hard at the floor.

"George," he said, "the other day I said that some time I would give you a little lesson in psychology. I didn't

know then that it would be so soon. You see, things haven't traveled on quite the even road for me—I've been a little different from the ordinary run of fellows. George," he adds, "did you ever read 'The Vampire'?"

"Yes, sir, once," says I, "up in the club library. I didn't quite understand it, though."

But he didn't seem to notice. His thoughts were in the far away now, back to a memory that hurt, and his features showed it.

"I met the vampire about five years ago, George," he was saying, "back in New York. I guess every fellow does that some time or other in his life, but I didn't have sense enough to stop. She played me, and she laughed at me, and she broke me, broke me in body and soul—but I couldn't see it until the end stared up at me, and mocked me, and jeered me. I guess I ought to have done what the usual fool does—tear the initials out of my clothing and—"

"You're not the kind of a man for that," I breaks in, and I meant it.

He looked at me, and tried to smile.

"No—I'm not, George," he answered. "Instead, I made up my mind to do just the opposite. My force of personality was gone, my health was gone, my power of being was gone, and I knew it. But just the same there was fight in me, strong fight and eager. I walked the streets one night—then I made up my mind. She'd thrown me over and laughed at me. Well, she'd have to come back to me—I'd make her, I'd build myself over, I'd come back to her a new being, and I'd force her to love me! And then—"

The thunder rolled again then, and he paused a bit. I waited for him to speak again, and, when he didn't, I tried to prompt him.

"Yes, sir," says I.

"Then I disappeared. I came out here. I built my little cabin up here in the hills, and I started a life that was a little different from anything I'd ever known. I used to live in the glare of the electric light; now I lived in the daytime. I used to see nothing but the painted side of life; now I saw the

natural. And watching the rugged hills about me, I tried to make myself as strong and as powerful. I was fighting, George!"

"You're all fight, when you try to be," I says. But he didn't seem to hear.

"And while I fought, while I got out in the open, and cut ties, and snaked them down the long skiff to Kremmling, while I plowed my way across the hills on my snowshoes when the big drifts came, there was a little girl who used to make me laugh when my lips wouldn't curl of their own accord, who used to sing and play the violin, and take me down to the other cabin at nights when it was lonely up here. She helped me decorate this room," he added, as he turned a bit, and I noticed that his voice had all gone husky, "and it seemed that, when I was with her, I just grew and grew until there wasn't anything in the world I couldn't do. She was just a little wild thing, but she was as well bred, and accomplished, and charming as any city girl. Her father used to tell me how he had come out here into the hills, staggering in the last hope for his health and life, and how he had won, and how he never was going back. He'd taught her, and—"

He stopped again at that, and I sorta turned my head at a flash from the sky—but it was just for a second.

"But that doesn't make much difference," he says. "Besides, I didn't know what was going to happen then. You see, George, I had only one thing in front of me—going back and making that woman in the Big City know and understand that she couldn't break me, that she would have to come to me, and have to love me in spite of everything. And when the Little Girl of the Hills and I would roam and pick the columbines in the evening, that is all I would think of. When she would come out to where I was working, dragging the ties down the hills to Kremmling, I'd smile at her and think to tell her how pretty she was—but there was some one else in my mind every minute. I didn't know she cared, George; I couldn't.

"Then came the time when I was to

go back. I noticed that her face was a little drawn when she said good-by, and that there was a queer something to her voice—but I didn't understand. All I could think of was the Big Town back yonder, and the woman who had laughed at me. And I went."

"Things change sometimes," I says, and I started as I looked at him. His face was drawn and gray. Slowlike he repeated my words, as if I had put 'em right into his brain.

"Things change—sometimes. I went back, and I saw her—and then I realized that the thing that had grown into my heart wasn't what I thought it was. I looked at her; I saw beneath the surface; I understood just what she was, and something just like fire swept through me. I almost trembled when I bought my ticket back to Kremmling, George. I *knew* whom it was I wanted now—knew it with every fiber of my body, knew it—"

His hand trembled on my shoulder, and his voice died away. I tried to say something to help him, but my throat was all dry and parchedlike, and I felt like you do in a dream when you want to scream, and can't. So I just waited—and after a while he turned to me and looked full into my eyes.

"George, I'd come back a little too late," he says, and his face looked wan and tired. "She had loved me a little too much, I guess; it was the only love she ever had known. More—a tree had fallen, and poor old Sanchez had come struggling into the house with the body of her father. Life was gone—"

The breath just seemed to jerk into his lungs, and I tried to grasp his hand all the tighter to show what I couldn't say. He looked around the room again and finally at the big books.

"The memory, George, is built a good deal like a brick wall. One idea fits into another, and each is necessary to the others' existence. Displace those ideas—and the past is wiped out. That's what happened with Betty."

"You mean—?" I'd started a little.

"When the second blow came, memory went. It was a little too much, George; she couldn't stand it. And so

it was just all wiped out—all her past—she began a new life, except for the knowledge of language, of reading and writing, and her violin. She didn't know that I had ever existed. Some way, by instinct, she accepted Sanchez as a servant—but that was all. When I came back, instead of loving me—I was—only a stranger."

He leaned hard against me.

I tried to answer him, but all I could say was something about the coming storm and the thunder. He didn't seem to hear me. His brain was too busy with it all, too busy with the thought of what had come upon him, too busy living it all over again, every pang, every heartache. At last I looked at him.

"Can't the doctors—"

I stopped, for he had smiled at me just a little.

"When there's no real illness, George," he answered me, "the doctors can't do much, you know. Betty is as well to-day as she ever was. Her brain is as keen. They can only tell me that her memory, her recollection, is disassociated; and I know that. She is as sweet as ever, she is as healthy—she is just another personality, that is all. She is some one, a new some one, who began life when the shock of it all disturbed that wall of ideas within her brain, and tumbled them into confusion. No, I've tried the doctors, and failed. I went away to forget. That failed, too. And now I'm back to wait, years maybe, possibly forever. There's only one chance—and that's impossible."

I started forward.

"One chance?"

"Loss caused it, loss must repair it," he answered slowlike. "Don't you see? What has been torn down must be rebuilt by the same method, and that cannot—"

A crash from above stopped him. There came a flare of whitish green as a great streak of lightning swept across the sky; the curtains at the windows bulged wide, then flew high above the jambs. The light flickered and went out.

Hurriedly I leaped from Mr. Win-

gate and ran to the back door. The pines in front of me were bending now—I heard one away off crackle and split, then tumble with the wind. Another great streak shot across the sky, while the hail and rain came pounding, rasping, rattling down upon the roof, and the dampness swept in at the door, cold against my cheek. Away off somewhere, I heard Mr. Wingate groping about and shouting for me to close the doors and windows. From one to another I went, pushing against them with all my strength to resist the wind that was sweeping in—then I started toward the front room.

We touched hands in the doorway, grasped each other, trembling and hesitant. From far down the hillside there had come the sound of a great crash, of one tremendous, reverberating roar, of the splintering of trees, and then a long, rolling, tearing sound that sickened and weakened us. I heard Mr. Wingate's gasp even above the rattle of the hail and the rush of the wind. I felt him tremble and sway—then he grasped me, and his voice was high and wild.

"The bowlder," he shouted; "the great bowlder—above the cabin. It's given away—it's caught the house!"

And I knew then—knew just what he meant, and what he feared. I'd seen it just that day, the great mass of stone, teetering on the hillside above her cabin. I turned with him, and, silent, hurrying, together we rushed out of the house and down the slippery trail toward the Silvertip.

The rain bit our faces, and the hail struck against us with vicious blows, but we couldn't stop. Scrambling, falling now and then, grasping here and there along the little trail for the branches of pines to aid us, guided only by the lightning that flashed and flashed again, we hurried on, our teeth gritted, our muscles tense. Now I was ahead, now Mr. Wingate. Once, on the edge of a big drop, I fell and grasped spasmodically about me—he caught me beneath an arm and lifted me to my feet as if I had been a child. On we went, on—on—

We stopped. There came a little

shout from Mr. Wingate as he bent over something that showed dim and crumpled before him.

"Sanchez!" he called. "Sanchez!"

He grasped the figure and raised it. He turned to me.

"It's Sanchez," he said, in a voice that was low and strange. "He's been hurt—probably trying to get to me to tell me—Take him to the cabin. I'm going on!"

And we separated, he to go slipping, hurrying on down the course of the Silvertip, his head bowed against the whip of the rain and hail, I to struggle up the mountain again, with Sanchez on my back. Someway I reached the cabin and laid him on the bed. I bathed the great, jagged cut that showed across his forehead, I saw the blood trickling from his ears and his nostrils; then I lit the light beside him and hurried away. Sanchez had done his best—and died a-doing it.

Down again. The storm was letting up a little now, and the hail had stopped. Down again, while the sharp rocks dug into my flesh when I fell against them; down again until I saw the wreck of the cabin before me, and the great bowlders strewn everywhere, like the playthings of a giant grown angry. The lightning flashed again, and I saw Mr. Wingate standing there, with wreckage piled about him, his hands torn and bloody, his eyes staring.

"Not here," he said, and his voice was crisp with the awfulness of it all. "Not here—"

I leaped forward.

"It's the ledge then," I said. "She was out there with the violin—I saw her—"

He had seized me by the arm and whirled me about.

"Come on!" came tersely.

But she was not there. And she was not in the cañon or along the Silvertip, whose murmur long before had changed to a roar. She was not where the pines lay heavy and thick upon the sides of the hills; she was gone, gone to where we couldn't find her—and the blood swelled hard in the veins of my arm

beneath the cutting clutch of Mr. Win-gate's hand. We stumbled on. We called again and again. We went to our knees and searched the ground, struggling to look everywhere with each flash of green from above. But it was hopeless. We turned at last; then, silent, heads bowed, we sought the house.

We passed a window, and Mr. Win-gate turned his head. One look he gave within, and there came a shout from him as he sprang forward and threw himself against the door. Close behind him I came—and then stood still in the doorway, as I looked in.

She was before us, kneeling by the bed, her hands wandering over the face of the unseeing, unknowing Sanchez, her voice crooning in the misery of it all. A start. She raised herself and stared for just a second at the man before her, standing wide-armed, hesitant. She rose, and her arms came forward.

"Joe!" she cried. "Joe—it's Sanchez—Sanchez is dead—Sanchez is dead!"

And the arms spread wide as he rushed forward—spread wide and closed about a sobbing, trembling little girl who leaned upon him, while his head bent low, and all the love, all the tenderness in the world showed in his eyes as they looked down into hers, while—

"You know me?" he asked, and there was something in his voice that made me tremble. "You know me, Betty! You know me!"

As she answered, something came into my heart that made me close the door and go outside into the night, to stand with my face tipturned to the driving mist, and the low, racing clouds, to be glad of the tears that joined the raindrops. Then I wondered if the soul of him who lay lifeless and cold inside could know what it all meant—that the love that had served so long in life had fulfilled its mission at the end of the long, long lane. And with the thought, something in my heart told me that Sanchez knew—that he knew and understood.



THE OPEN ROAD

As the homeless long for home, I am weary for the sight of it,
The swerve of it, the curve of it, the shadow-dappled white of it;
The noonlight, the moonlight, the pine-dusk fragrance dim;
The ring of frost-touched highway,
The hush of leaf-strewn byway,
And the patteran that beckons to the far horizon's rim.

As the homeless long for home, I am heartsick at the call of it,
The dure of it, the lure of it, the thorny miles and all of it;
The star gleam, the far gleam of beechland-kindled fire;
The dim hills distant lifting,
The gray mists shadow-drifting,
And the calm of pine-breathed uplands on the ache of old desire.

As the homeless long for home, I am hangered for the touch of it,
The length of it, the strength of it, the steel and velvet clutch of it;
The known ways, the lone ways, from clustered towns apart;
The scent of rain-sweet heather,
The cloud-white wander-weather,
And the hawk-free, gypsy will of it, to still a vagrant heart!

MARTHA HASKELL CLARK.



THE ELIXIR OF EROS BY EDGAR SALTUS

THERE are topics about which words hover like enchanted bees. The Elixir of Love is one of them. It suggests cups of moonlight and kisses, brews of rainbows and honey, flagons of flowers and stars.

The ingredients are less apocalyptic. The "Iliad," which is a good book, though not a cookbook, supplies them. They consist of youth and beauty. Properly distilled, flavored with illusion, and charged with romance, these things yield a philter that was known on Olympus as nectar. Nectar was the usual beverage of the gods. We may assume that it was very inspiring. It induced the liveliest variations on the Carnival of Venus.

But here a problem may be posed. What is the exact meaning of love? Commonly it is translated as the affection of somebody else. But it is not quite that. The privilege, mutually accorded by two people, of causing each other a great deal of discomfort, is perhaps more precise. But it is not quite that, either. The fact of not being bored by the party of the second part is nearer, but still not just it. On the other hand, to say that love is the poetry of the senses sounds prosy. To say that it is to be two and yet but one seems calculating. Yet these definitions have their value. Love represents them all, and at the same time something else. For love is a pathological condition superinduced by a fermentation of the molecules of the imagination. It is a febrile complaint, a fever that ends with a yawn.

Locally and generally that is, but not on Olympus. The high gods knew a

trick worth three of that. With them, love was ever what it should be here—a joyous thing. Into their fancy balls the fever came, but not the yawn. To prolong the one and prevent the other, nectar was served by a flame of fair faces that changed with each dance.

As it was on Olympus, so it is rumored to be in paradise. There Mohammed promised the faithful a sara-band of fresh houris every day. Every day is perhaps excessive. Yet, none the less, it may be that Mohammed saw that nothing is constant but change. The view appears worldly, and so it is. But then Mohammed was that. He was essentially a man of the world, a man of this world and also of the next.

His program, over which others have meditated, Schopenhauer festooned with a madrigal to the effect that love is an illusion that dupes the individual into mistaking for his happiness that which is not his happiness at all, and that, the gulling once effected, drops a mask and is gone. *Amantes amentes*—lovers are liars—he might have added, and probably would have had he thought.

The envoi that he omitted it is but a duty to supply, not only because Jove was said to laugh at lovers' perjuries, but because it goes to show the propriety of the etiquette that presided over the Olympian fancy balls; the tact, too, that led Mohammed to promise what he did. Both the etiquette and the promise were based on a suspicion that constancy is just like bravery, a thing due to lack of imagination, and consequently not always and everywhere a preëminent grace.

Byron darkly hinted as much, and the

first Francis of France wrote with a diamond—the proper pen for a king—a scurrility to the same effect. "*Souvent femme varie*," sang the monarch; "Men were deceivers ever," said the bard. Both were roundly abused for it. It was said to be wicked of them. Well, platitudes always are wicked. Whatever original sin may be, the unoriginal sin is obviousness. To say that it is a fine day when the fact is patent, constitutes one of those crimes that the law cannot reach. But apart from such iniquities, it may be wondered whether anybody has ever been really wicked, or, more exactly, whether in any normal person there has ever been anything beyond—or below—ambition, apprehension, egotism, curiosity, the faculty for being bored, and the ability to bore other people. To aspire, perspire, and expire seems to be the common lot.

So at least historians maintain. But not suffragists. Suffragists have emphatic views on the subject, as, for that matter, they have on every subject, and one should never argue with emphatic people. The one safe course is to let them talk. If you interrupt, they overwhelm you with statistics, and you succumb from sheer ennui. Besides, suffragists are not perhaps what one might describe as imaginative. They cannot be induced to believe that, apart from natural depravity or even including it, the average brute is not a free agent.

Perhaps we none of us are. It is true that we think otherwise. It is also true that the idea flatters us, and that does us no harm. On the contrary, an agreeable illusion is always hygienic. The illusion of free will is due to the idea that, subject to the limitations of place and circumstance, we can do as we like. Apparently so we may. In the appearance is the illusion. For even those who know what's what usually forget that in the brain are numberless little cells that, through as many little currents, create our wants, and with them our temptations, our tempers, and our tastes.

We think that we can do as we like. It is the cells and currents that prompt us. We know what we want, but not

whence the wanting arises. The source of it is not mental; it is fundamental. We think otherwise, and there is the illusion, which is agreeable, and consequently hygienic.

There, too, is the explanation of every inexplicable affair. The wicked cells instruct the innocent individual that that girl or that man is the one girl, or the one man, for him or for her.

When similar cells similarly actuate the other party, you get cards for the wedding. Later, perhaps, you get curious about the divorce. The cells that cause two hearts to beat as one never guarantee a continuous performance. The affections are just like slippers; they will wear out.

When this happens, it may be that the wicked cells will prompt the deluded wretches to try it again, to change partners, and on with the dance. Moreover, as private life, which used to be a sealed book, has become an open newspaper, you get accounts of the festivities at breakfast. Incidentally, from the other end of the table there may float a few scandalized remarks. Then it may occur to you that it is a gracious Providence that has enabled certain ladies to condemn whatever they do not understand. For if the deluded wretches try it again, as they must if the cells impel them, then clearly it is not their fault. On the other hand, if they do nothing of the kind, as of course they will not if the cells omit to coerce them, then their righteousness is not to their credit, either, which goes to show, perhaps, the high value of blame and approval; and which perhaps shows also that whether a tango be prolonged, discontinued, or varied, the dance itself is not a mere matter of will.

Nor, perhaps, are the comments that it may occasion. To prevent them, physicians have prescribed the woods. There you have the double advantage of being by yourself, and of not being with other people. But the regimen, a trifle relaxing, is suited only to the sensitive. For others, platonism has been recommended, though that, too, has its defects. It is not every young person who is capable of putting but a soul in

the arms of a partner, nor is it every partner whom such ethereality delights. The real dilettantes of crystal diversions are the Dresden figures that stand on either end of a mantel with a big, chaperoning clock between. Others that enter into the mazes of the immaterial do so with no more definite object than that of getting out. For platonic affection, whatever its beauties, or, rather, because of them, is perhaps best adapted to married life. Otherwise it becomes a duo in which, when the soprano does not lose her head, the tenor loses his temper. And there you are back in the cells, though not in the Elixir of Eros.

That philter that Donizetti poured into one opera and Wagner into another is orchestrally *musicabellissima*, no doubt, but also a bit confusing. Among the fine fervors of the score, there is a screw loose. The sob of the harps, the murmur of muted brass, the sigh of the *viola d'amore*, the shrieks of the prima donna *assoluta*—or *dissoluta*, as the case may be—these things rather indicate that there is a false note somewhere, that Schopenhauer was not such an imbecile as he looked, that the real disappointment in love comes when your prayers are granted.

That false note, with its falser air of novelty, Donizetti did not invent, or Wagner, either. It has sounded through all the tragedies of Italy, through all the treacheries of France, through all the courts of Europe, including those of bankruptcy and divorce. It is not only false; it is, as all false things are, morose, and it is morose because inspired, not by the Olympian elixir, but by the imitation brand which composers, cantatrices, and the commonality generally mistake for the proper vintage. There are people who think they can get Tokay. Real Tokay is reserved for imperial cellars. The real elixir was reserved for Olympus. There love was always, as it should be here, a joyous thing.

In spite of which, or, perhaps, precisely on that account, the poets are right. Life is packed with delights—which the majority of us never enjoy.

The world is full of charming people—whom few of us ever meet. There is food for every hunger, a cup for every thirst. There are amusements for the simple, austerities for the sage. But of all things that the gods can give or take, love is best.

Concerning the proper way of greeting and of treating it, doctors differ. In Prague—not the city on the map, but the capital of the metaphorical realm—a migratory system of experiences is usual. But what is usual is generally stupid, in addition to being vulgar. Though admittedly, among the best people—among people, that is, who know nothing of Prague, and probably could not spell it if they did, among the gentry here and elsewhere it is quite the thing to marry, divorce, and marry again. But not oftener. Those who go down for the third time are regarded as forever lost. There are even futurists who go so far as to say that once is enough.

In commenting on it recently, a post-impressionist stated that after marriage a woman will often reveal qualities that her husband had not included in his conception of her gifts. And certainly, and even more frequently, vice versa. Perhaps it was on just such surprises that Reno was built. In any event, the drama of them is occasionally staged. There a man is now and again discovered awakening to the fact that he is married to a lady to whom he has never been introduced. Now and again he is also discovered falling in love with another lady with whom he is as yet unacquainted. But discretion is the better part of platitude. A proper regard for the unities prevents the dramatist from making the brute in love with both.

In these latitudes at least. Though some time ago a man fell in love with two girls, both of whom were in love with him. In this neighborhood he would have had either to marry one and jilt the other, or else cut and run for it. This man did nothing of the sort. He was too romantic. With a chivalresqueness that one may admire without wishing to emulate, both of the girls he married.

The simplicity of that may seem a bit complex. But it all happened in China. In these latitudes a man so romantically chivalresque would get three years and two mothers-in-law, or at law, in the discretion of the judge.

The idea, though, is not improperly suggestive. A few years since, the press provided accounts of a young woman who lived in Boston, and who, to an admiring clinic, had successively and successfully disclosed six distinct personalities, six varieties of her radiant self.

Goethe said comfortably: "In me, two souls reside." This lady had half a dozen of them. The happy man who fell in love with her, and who, after falling, perhaps fell out, could fall in love with a second edition of the lady, and so on through convenient manifestations of her multiple self. What is more, and more to the point, he could in this fashion, and even in Boston, realize the joys of paradise, and that, too, without conning the 'Koran or being subjected to uncivil proceedings, the attentions of judges and mothers-at-law.

But a household of this kind is not for everybody. For which, perhaps, there is cause for thanksgiving. Yet, should something seem missing in the scheme of things, there is a consolation, one really enormous when you come to consider it, in the thought that that omission the future will probably supply.

How matters are conducted in paradise there are no records to tell. None at least that are available. But we know what occurred on Olympus. We know that on its resplendent parapets the harmonies of divine honeymoons continued until, in skylarking revels, the gods went from bad to worse. Then Eros faded into hexameters, and the nectar was spilled in with him.

But, everything being possible, the primal poetry of it may be renewed. Materialists maintain that humanity descends from apes. Mystics declare that from humanity gods will arise. Both agree that the story of Olympus

is but a tale of what might have been, and mathematicians admit that what might have been may yet come to pass.

Even now, could the old gods return, they might feel themselves rather eclipsed. The wireless is a better messenger than they had, the aéroplane swifter than their chariots of dream. The afflatus that they dispensed we lack—commerce may have alarmed it away—but we have photographed planets that never swam into their ken, telephoned over spaces that were not on their map, submarine seas that were not on their charts, phonographed roulades that were beyond their range, cinematographed dramas that exceed their own, X-rayed dislocations that they never had, patented antisepsics that they did not need, spawned novels from which they were spared, created costumes that they would not have been found dead in, developed a worship of self that would have amused them not a little, acquired a serious view of things that would have amused them still more, and tossed up skyscrapers that are showier than the parapets on which they lolled.

It is true that we are hypocritical, which they were not, and censorious, which they never could be. It is true, also, that we are unable to accept, with their gayety and indulgence, such accidents as we cannot avoid. The inextinguishable laughter that was theirs is absent from our prose of life.

But the graces that they had and that we lack, time will bring. In the same manner that we have exceeded them, so will posterity exceed what we have done. From posterity gods may really come; beings, that is, who, could contemporaneous man remain to see them, would regard him as he regards the ape.

When that day dawns—when it does! —one does not need to be clairvoyant to assume that there will be gayety, laughter, and indulgence to spare, and with them, in lieu of our amusing defects, cascades of the real elixir.



WHITE-HAIRED and benevolent, the Reverend Ephraim Browne listened patiently to the protestations of the penitent. Then he said to Daniel Judd Wickens:

"Of course, there's a chance for you. No one will ever convince me that an all-wise God ever made a wholly crude thing."

Sometimes, when I reflect on the career of Judd, the short, bullet-headed, small-eyed forger, who went in and out of jail with painful regularity just because his luck was always out, I wonder what were the thoughts of the Reverend Ephraim Browne when the story of the Great Chance was made known to him.

Looking at him through the eye of the psychologist, Judd was about the most hopeless material ever fashioned. Wickedness was stamped all over him. There wasn't a single redeeming feature. One eye squinted—only one; he would have been less repellent if both had gone wrong. His hair had been cut so frequently by the official shearers that it resembled the bristles of an old yard broom; also, its color was a brilliant magenta, save over the ears, where time had eaten into it. Taking the whole of his face, it would have been impossible to avoid touching a freckle with a pin point.

Judd's age was a matter of conjecture. He himself reckoned it by the number of years that he had spent in jail, deducting ten to allow for his youth. He was never out for more than six months at a stretch; in fact, the facetious at the penitentiary swore that

they kept his room private. However, during the brief respites that he enjoyed, he managed to marry; and, what is more, to become the father of five children. Happily for them, they saw very little of him. The burden of feeding and clothing them fell on the poor little woman who, in a weak moment, had given herself to Judd.

It was in February that the prison gates opened to turn him loose again on the world. For three years he had been paying the penalty of forging a check. By the way, the judge who decided his case had paid a glowing tribute to the genius of the little man. He had said that the forgery was a work of art; also, that it was the most tragic thing imaginable that a man of such gifts should devote himself to a life of crime.

"In the solitude of your cell," he had continued, glaring at the little red-headed man in the dock, "try to think out some idea for uplifting yourself. You have a gift; I am certain of that. Try to exercise it in a manner worthy of you."

Judd had shown no greater appreciation of the homily than had been expressed in a semi-audible remark addressed to the warden at his side.

"What's the old pigeon jawin' about?" he had inquired.

The next minute, he had been stumbling down the stairs to the cell, there to await removal to the penitentiary.

It is not unlikely that Judd had completely forgotten the words of the judge when he came out after finishing his sentence. He had positively no intention of using a gift of his in any way,

unless it were for the furthering of some evil scheme.

His argument was simply this: "I'm bad, and I can't be worse. I've taken all that's come to me without yelping. If the police are cleverer than I am, I deserve to be copped; if I beat them, it's one to me. Anyway, why should I be different?"

Which goes to show that Judd had no moral sense whatever.

The incentive came when he reached home. It took him a long while to find the house, for during the three years of his absence, Mrs. Daniel Judd Wickens had been compelled to move probably a score of times. She was scrubbing the kitchen floor when he put his foot on the threshold. She must have thought that it was the agent calling for the rent, because, without looking up, she said:

"It's no good your calling to-day. I've had the doctor in."

"Cheer-o, Emily!" Judd said, and in a second she was on her feet, wiping her wet, coarse hands on a coarser apron. The perspiration was trickling down her face, and she wiped it out of her eyes with the back of her hand.

"You! Lord! Sit down, Judd. There—don't move till I get a look at you. When'd you come out?"

"Smornin'," he said laconically. "And I've been huntin' round for hours lookin' for you. What d'you want to shift about for like a cricket, eh?"

She shook her head, as if she could not find words to express herself; then she sat down, and, leaning an elbow on the table, looked at him.

"Man, Judd!" she said. "If you only knew what we've been through!"

"Sayin' nothin' about me, I s'pose?" said Judd reproachfully.

"Have you had a very hard time, Judd?"

"Same as usual. 'Tain't a picnic in there. Got anythin' to eat?"

"There's a bit o' fish in the cupboard. I was keepin' it for her."

"Who?" Judd asked suspiciously.

"For Ivy Lorna. We're goin' to lose her, Judd."

The wicked little eyes were blinking as if the light hurt them.

"What are you givin' me?" he asked.

"True as true. The doctor says it's all up with her. Consumption."

"Gawd!" said Judd, and was silent for a minute.

Ivy Lorna—how the mother had plumed herself on conceiving the baptismal name—was the eldest of Judd's five children, and the only one that had ever aroused in him the emotions of a parent. If there was one speck of white in the soiled heart of Daniel Judd Wickens, it had been created by the little tousle-headed girl, who had been the strongest pillar the mother had had to lean on when crying children and sheer blank walls had threatened to drive her to distraction.

Ivy Lorna was one of those precocious little housekeepers of ten or eleven who seem to be made for toil when other children are romping in the playground. Ivy Lorna "mothered" the other members of the family, she was never without one of them in her arms; and it may have been that the unfair strain on her young body had been responsible for the development of the disease that was wasting her.

While Judd was sitting there, the sound of labored coughing came from an upstairs room.

"Hark!" said Mrs. Wickens. "That's her. She's always coughin'. Why don't you go upstairs to look at her?"

"What did the doctor say?" he asked.

"I ain't paid him yet."

He frowned at the irrelevancy.

"You heard what I said?"

He clenched his hands, and the little eyes rolled wickedly.

She resented his attitude by flying into a passion.

"I'll tell you what he said," she shot at him, between clenched teeth. "He said you weren't no man! If you'd done what's right by me and the children, we might 'a' had some little happiness—we might 'a' saved her. But you've never done nothin', 'cept thieve and forge—"

"Shut it!" he warned her.

"—and get into prison and out of

it, and lounge, and loaf, and never earn an honest cent. If you'd been a man, you'd have seen that the child's never been what she ought to have been since she was six. What's the good of the doctor tellin' me that she ought to have open air, and sea voyages, and all that kind of thing? I know what she wants."

"What?" he asked.

"A new father."

Judd grinned, as if he didn't consider it worth while to argue with her.

"How much would a sea voyage cost?" he asked. "Was he keen on it? The doctor, I mean."

"Said it was about the only chance she had. What do you mean by 'What would it cost?' Go and look at the child. Go and listen to her, and then ask yourself if you could do another five years for her sake."

"I'd do ten," he said, and he meant it.

She went near him, and her voice was less harsh as she said: "That wouldn't do any good. Ivy Lorna's a woman, though she's only ten, and, like all women, she doesn't know why a man like you makes all the difference to her. It's you she wants. Go and see her."

Judd went up to the room above. His wife tiptoed to the foot of the stairs and listened. She heard the girl cry out in an ecstasy of joy, and she heard—it amazed her—she heard the little red-headed man sobbing as if his heart would break.

After a long while, he came downstairs. Honesty had never before fought so desperate a battle for a place in his eyes.

"I'm goin' straight, Emily," he said. "I am, sure as death. I'm goin' to work."

She shook her head doubtfully.

"You've said that before, Judd."

"But I mean it this time. I'm goin' straight—for her."

"It's too late, Judd."

She was on her knees again, and the noise of the scouring prevented her hearing the throat sounds that Judd couldn't suppress.

"You don't believe me, Emily?"

She looked up over her shoulder. "You've had so many chances," she sighed.

"Look here!" He struck his left palm with his right fist. "I know I've never been any good to anybody, but then I've never had the right kind of chance. Nobody ever seemed to give me the right sort of encouragement—"

"I'd a' done it, Judd, but I've never had much time."

He nodded, as if the fact that always she was working had not escaped him.

"It's been rough on you, Emily," he confessed. "And you've always played square— Who told her that I'd been away to sea?"

"Who should you think?"

"I shan't forget you for that, Emily."

He was silent for a while. The little eyes were almost closed; the freckled brow was wrinkled.

"The old codger who gave me my last stretch"—she might not have been in the room, for he was not addressing his words to her—"he said to me that I had a gift, if I only knew how to use it. 'The gift's all right,' I said to myself. 'What I want is the chance.' Emily, does the old parson fellow come nosin' round as he used to?"

"He was with her yesterday." She wiped her eyes with a corner of the coarse apron. "And if you'd heard him, Judd—if you'd seen the tears pourin' out of his eyes—you'd have been sick for yourself."

Judd straightened his little figure, and walked to the door.

"I know you don't believe me," he threw back from the doorway. "I know you don't think I'm on the square this time, but I am—s'elp me, I am! I'm goin' to see him."

And it was in these circumstances that Daniel Judd Wickens, the degenerate, laid his petition at the feet of the Reverend Ephraim Browne. On his knees, Judd gave the promise that was demanded; then he went home and sang Ivy Lorna to sleep.

He didn't go to bed himself that night, and when Mrs. Wickens crept downstairs in the early morning, she

found a new man—a new husband, a new father—seated at the table, with the first real flash of intelligence that she had seen in his eyes. On the table before him were the contents of a kit bag that he had brought from prison when he was discharged.

"Emily!" he said in a whisper, as she entered the room, "I knew it'd come! To think I should have forgotten it!"

She didn't speak.

"It's the chance!" he said. "There may be nothin' in it, but it's started somethin'—in here," and he placed his hand over his heart. "When he gave it to me—"

"What are you talkin' about, Judd?"

"Here, look for yourself!"

He handed her a piece of parchment, twelve inches square. It was yellow with age, frayed at the edges, and worn in the folds. On it were scrawled a mass of hieroglyphics far beyond her understanding.

"It's a chart," he said. "That's what it is."

She nodded, and there was an expression of awe on her face.

"I can't read it, Judd."

"No more can I," he said, "but it's a chart."

"What's that say?" She pointed her finger at the half dozen lines of writing at the foot of the chart.

"It's French," he said. "But I'll bet the parson can read it. I'm goin' to take it to him."

"But what's it all about?" she asked impatiently, although she, too, was trembling in sympathy with him.

"An old 'lag' gave it to me," he said, lowering his voice until it was hardly audible. "We were in the hospital together, and I did him a good turn. He was a sailor, and he'd kept this thing hidden about him with amazin' cunnin'. He knew he was 'all in,' and he said to me, 'I've a little gal, same as you, Judd, and I've been keepin' this for her. There's treasure there,' he says. 'Gawd knows how much, and you can find it as easy as easy. If you do "touch,"' he says, and he makes me swear an oath, 'you'll look after my little girl, and give her my share.' He said the chart was

given to him by his grandfather. What do you think about it?"

"Bunkum," said Mrs. Wickens. "I never believed those stories about treasure. Where is it, anyway?"

"If I could read it, I could tell you. What I want to know is, can I trust the parson?"

"Where is his little gal?" Mrs. Wickens asked.

Judd turned over the chart, and showed her an address written on the back.

"I'll come with you to the parson," said Mrs. Wickens, with sudden conviction.

With great care, he folded up the chart, and together they went to the parsonage. It is not to pay more credit to their intelligence than is due when it is said that neither of them shut their eyes to the possibility of this chart being no more than a shred of hope. To Mrs. Wickens, it was little more than a Chinese puzzle, and from the clumsy way in which Judd himself had tried to read the writing—holding the chart first upside down, then sidewise—it was apparent to her that he was no further enlightened than she was.

The Reverend Ephraim Browne received them in his study, and with a graciousness that was near to the beautiful, listened to Judd's story. When the little red-headed man pulled out the chart and handed it over, the clergyman fingered it gingerly, for, in truth, it was somewhat odoriferous. But his interest quickened the moment his eyes fell on the writing. He read it aloud, and Judd, as he listened, plucked nervously at his tweed cap. Mrs. Wickens' lips were moving pitifully.

According to the chart, there was a coral reef in the Pacific, no more than a hundred miles due south of the Sandwich Islands. A pearl trader, of evil reputation, had run his schooner on the reef, and pearls of great value—the Reverend Ephraim Browne ciphered it out at a quarter of a million—were submerged in leaden chests in the lagoon formed by the reef. The date on the chart was 1790, and even Judd was able to surmise that no particle of the

wrecked schooner would be visible above water. The chart itself was very elaborate in detail, and in the hands of a capable navigator would be comparatively easy to follow.

Contrary to Mrs. Wickens' expectations, the Reverend Ephraim Browne was deeply moved by the thing, and instead of warning them not to build too high on so flimsy a hope, he asked permission to keep the chart by him for a day, in order that he might the more closely study it.

Twelve hours later, the clergyman sent for Daniel Judd Wickens, and without any hesitation told him that, in spite of all the stories of Pacific bubbles that had trailed through the century, he believed sincerely that there was something in this. Of course, he was unable personally to finance an expedition, but he was ready, without hope of reward, to introduce Judd to men who might be prepared to take up the enterprise.

A week later, Judd Wickens, the man who wanted a chance—the man who had been stirred out of moral turpitude by the hectic flush on a child's cheek—was sitting on a red-leather settee in a New York office. The Reverend Ephraim Browne was sitting near him, counseling him in whispers not to be disappointed if the interview should prove fruitless; there were others who might be interested. Judd just nodded his head as if he had not quite heard. As a matter of fact, his brain was galloping. The whole world seemed to be whirling around.

When the three partners in Lubinstein & Co. came in, Judd rose to his feet and pulled at an imaginary forelock. He didn't like the look of the Lubinstins. They reminded him of vultures that he had once seen in a zoölogical garden. He turned appealingly to his clerical friend, and the Reverend Ephraim Browne pressed his hand reassuringly.

The clergyman explained the circumstances, although he had previously outlined them in his letter. The chart was examined minutely. Telephone calls were made, and three experts were

called in to give their opinion. Each expert in turn examined the chart, first with the naked eye, then through a microscope. Of its age, they had no doubt whatever. Then a sea captain was sent for, and he, too, peered at the chart. Without any hesitation, he declared that he could take a ship to the spot, although, to his own knowledge, there were thousands of similar reefs scattered over the Pacific.

In the end, Daniel Judd Wickens signed an agreement. The Reverend Ephraim Browne was opposed to the suggested apportionment of the treasure, if found, but Judd was ready to accept one-fifth, in consideration of the syndicate financing the expedition.

A fortnight later, the *Osprey*, of three thousand tons, left New York harbor. One of the Lubinstein partners was on board, and so was Daniel Judd Wickens. And Judd's little girl was with him. He had stipulated that he should be allowed to take her. She wouldn't be in the way. He would see to that.

The crew was composed of twelve lascars, the first and only mate from Philadelphia, and Captain Gregory Stubbs, a stout, florid man with a hide like leather, and a heart as tough.

II.

It was on board the *Osprey* that Daniel Judd Wickens first experienced the delightful thrill of newly acquired importance. They were three hours out from New York, when he summoned up sufficient courage to ask the captain if he and his little girl might sit in the bow of the ship; he promised that he wouldn't get in the way of any of the sailors.

The captain said, "Certainly, sir," and dispatched two lascars for deck chairs. Judd thanked the two sailors with a politeness so foreign to his nature that even Ivy Lorna expressed the hope that he wasn't "took with anything."

The lascars glanced at each other, then they glanced at the bridge where the first mate, Hollywell, was pacing gloomily to and fro. Hollywell saw

more than the lascars saw, but he kept his thoughts to himself until the following day, when he sauntered up to the deck chairs in the bow. He touched Ivy Lorna lightly on the cheek, and promised her that she should see a real flying fish when they drew near the "line." He explained the "line" with a sailor's love of narrative, and was interested to note that Daniel Judd Wickens was as skeptical as his daughter.

"I understand that you've done a bit of voyaging, sir," he said tentatively.

"Quite a heap," said Judd, without a blush.

Ivy Lorna, thin and fragile, volunteered a budget of information concerning the wonderful lands her father had described to her.

"Been in the Pacific, of course?" said the mate, cocking his head on one side.

"Passed through it, so to speak," said Judd, with studied carelessness.

The mate looked at the little girl; she had crossed to the rail, and was throwing down pieces of biscuit to the fish.

"How old is she?" the mate asked, lowering his voice to a whisper.

"Ten," said Judd, screwing up his little eyes.

"Ain't very strong, is she?"

Judd shook his head and sighed.

"She'll pick up when we strike the warm weather," the mate said cheerily, adding to himself, "But she'd have had a better chance in the cold." Aloud, he said with sudden bitterness: "I had one taken with that."

"What?" said Judd.

The mate smacked his chest.

"Ten, she was," he said. "Same as her."

Judd fetched a deep breath.

"Did it cut you up?" he asked fearfully.

The mate laughed, a very hollow laugh.

"What cut me most," he said grimly, "was that she had a chance, but when you're getting thirty dollars a month on a 'tramp,' you can't afford to do all the doctors advise. Know old Lubinstein? Head of this syndicate?"

Judd nodded affirmatively.

"I tried to borrow a hundred dol-

lars from him to send the little maid away. He said a mate had no business to have children. Wish he was on this trip instead of the young un."

"Why?" Judd's lips were parted.

"I'd pile her up on the rocks, I would," said the mate.

Judd half turned in his chair to face his man.

"And that's your idea of brains!" he said, with a sneer.

The mate shrugged his shoulders.

"You don't know the Lubinstines," he said. "Bet they've got you by the neck on this job. What's to be your share of the swag?"

"Swag! I don't like that word," said Judd, with great strength of resolution.

The mate laughed.

"Do you think ghouls like the Lubinstines'd fit out a trip of this sort if they didn't think they could filch the lot? Wish I'd met you before you parted with your secret. I could have got you decent terms."

"I'm satisfied," said Judd quietly.

A moment of silence. Then:

"What's the old man to get out of it?" the mate inquired.

"Meanin'——"

"The captain."

"I suppose he'll get his wages—like all of you," said Judd, a little stiffly.

"And, of course, you think he'll be satisfied."

"That's got nothin' to do with me."

"Of course it hasn't. You're in the position of a bloomin' capitalist."

Judd's wicked eyes began to roll.

"Askin' for it, ain't yer?"

"For what?" said the mate.

"A thick un."

"Come to an anchor," said the mate. "You can't bluff me."

Judd was short of stature, but every inch of him was tough. He drew back a clenched fist.

The mate said:

"Don't be a fool! Young Lubinstein's watching us from the saloon window."

"I'll go and speak to him," said Judd determinedly.

"No, you won't," the mate sneered.

"Supposing I went up to him and said things—"

"What things?"

"That I'd noticed and jotted down in my memory. For instance, why is it that some men never put their hands in their pockets, even when there's a bite in the wind? Why is it that they never walk quietlike, but allus run—little, short steps?"

"How do I know?"

"A friend of mine," said the mate reminiscingly, "once did a stretch of three years. When he came out, it took him weeks and weeks to remember that he had pockets *now*; and it took him longer'n that to remember that there was no more need to take short steps for exercise, same as he used to in the cell."

Judd thoughtfully rubbed the point of his chin.

"You're a knowin' kind of cuss, I bet," he said leisurely; "but tell me what you're tryin' to find out, and mebbe I can help you."

"Where did you pinch that chart?"

"I didn't pinch it."

"Who gave it to you?"

"That's my business."

The mate rose from the deck chair.

"If I were to tell the old man that he doesn't come into the share-out," he said, slowly and insinuatingly, "this tub would crawl about the Pacific like a blind dog trying to find the marrow in a piece of gas piping. That's him! And if *he* doesn't come into the share-out, I suppose it would be a sheer waste of wind to inquire about my share?"

"Your share," said Judd, very thoughtfully and very earnestly, "will be a cast-iron punch in the jaw if you don't soon learn how to keep your place."

The mate went to his quarters to think out the situation. The little red-headed man called Ivy Lorna to his side, and for a whole hour he told her stories of the seas he had sailed and the forests he had explored. And he counted the number of times she coughed in that hour. Every fit of coughing hurt him as much as it hurt her.

As the days and the weeks slipped by, the excitement on board the *Osprey* increased, and every day consultations were held in the chart room between Judd, Lubinstein, and the captain. Meanwhile, the health of the little girl was becoming a topic of conversation at mealtimes; it was a relief to turn from the main object and relax the nerves.

Lubinstein appeared not to concern himself with the child; he confessed to the mate that he couldn't understand the sickly sentiment of his partners that had induced them to allow the girl on board. Nevertheless, he began to make inquiries about the night she had passed, when Judd entered the saloon for breakfast.

The captain was more humane in his attitude, and believing that optimism was more helpful than pessimism, he was forever dwelling on the story of a friend of his who had gained a new lease of life by taking a long sea voyage. Then, having told and elaborated this story, he would endeavor to switch the conversation back to the treasure. He, himself, had done a little pearl fishing, he said, and if he couldn't locate the reef, no one could; he reckoned that he was familiar with every pearl "ground" in the Pacific.

The mate, having nothing to gain from the success or failure of the expedition, developed a new interest in human nature by studying the face of the little red-headed man. Satisfied that he was right in his conjectures, he began to wonder how an ex-convict, and an illiterate one at that, would set about the dissipating of a suddenly acquired fortune. Although the precious chart had not been shown to him—he had to navigate according to a rough translation—the captain had said enough to convince him that there was substance in it. His rooted belief was that Judd had stolen the thing, but for reasons of his own he did not confide that belief to any one else. The little girl, with her precocious ways and wonderful imagination, fascinated him; he saw in her a great deal that reminded him of his own child—the child he had lost.

Since the episode in the bows, he

and Judd had spoken very little to one another; the tacit feud between them would not admit of conversation. But one afternoon—the *Osprey* was heading northwest for Honolulu, where certain appliances, catalogued by the captain, were to be picked up—the mate touched the little man on the shoulder as he was walking the deck. In a voice so modulated that it aroused suspicion at once, he asked to be allowed to "take back" all that he had said in the bows. Then:

"How's the little gal?" he asked.

"Middlin'," said Judd; "only middlin'."

She had been very sleepy all the forenoon, and the painful, hacking cough had robbed her of almost every ounce of strength.

"It's too hot in these waters," said the mate, shaking his head knowingly. "Look here!" He hesitated; not that he feared the wrath of the little man, but because he did not want to leave the impression that he was trying to ingratiate himself with a view to some vague reward. "I'm getting mighty fond of that little gal," he said, looking past his man.

Judd nodded stupidly; sympathy was new to him.

"If anything happened to her—" The mate cleared his throat, for he had seen signs that were hidden from the father. "If anything happened to her, it would all come back—I know."

"What?"

The small eyes were watching him narrowly.

"All that I felt when my little gal was taken. It was just like being hit on the head with a hammer; you could hear a singing in the ears for weeks and weeks."

"Nothin's goin' to happen to her," said Judd stubbornly; "and when we're through with this, you'll see what a woman I'll make of her."

The mate thought a moment.

"Do you know what I'd do with the money?" he said. "I'd seek out as many kids as possible—kids like her—and I'd send 'em away to give 'em a chance."

Judd nodded indifferently, and went back to the cabin, where the little girl was lying on a bunk, her face turned to the open porthole.

"How goes it with you?" he asked, with rough tenderness.

"Awful bad, daddy," she replied, and the coughing came on again.

He raised her head and asked if she'd like some water, but she didn't want anything—only her father. He sat on the edge of the bunk and held her hand. She was still looking out of the porthole.

"Awful lonely out there, dad—eh?" she said presently. "Is it very deep?"

"Miles deep, kiddy."

She shivered; her eyes were riveted on the waste of water.

"When are we going back, dad?" she asked plaintively.

"Soon," he said; "very soon."

"When you've got all the pearls—eh?"

"Yes, when we've got them all."

"What will you do with them, dad?"

"Sell 'em, I expect."

"You'll be buying mum all sorts of things—eh?"

"All sorts," he acquiesced.

"I know what I'd like."

"So do I," said Judd, with a little gulp. "Somethin' new in here—eh?" He tapped his chest.

"No." This very decidedly. "I'd like a ring—a gold one—same as Mr. Hollywell's little girl had."

"A ring?" Judd shook his wicked little head as if he didn't understand.

"When they buried Mr. Hollywell's little girl, they put her mother's ring on her finger. He said they might as well take the lot. Her mother died years before she did."

"Hollywell is a fool," said Judd, tightening his lips. "He doesn't know what he's talkin' about."

She turned her face so that she could see him.

"He cried when I was took with the coughing yesterday," she told him. "And he says he's mighty sorry for you."

"I don't want him to be sorry."

"He says the Jew man will get all the pearls out of you, 'cute as you are."

"He's mad because he ain't to have any."

"Tisn't that, dad; he says pearls wouldn't be any use to him. He lost a big one somewhere, he said, and he'll never get one like it."

"And he's a liar," said Judd, with emphasis. "Hark!"

"The noise is stopping, dad."

The engine had slowed down, they were nearing Honolulu.

A day out from Honolulu! There was great excitement in the chart room. Six hours' steaming and they would be in the waters off the reef. Lubinstein was agitated; he had picked up a cablegram at Honolulu, and the task suggested didn't seem particularly hard. He said to the captain:

"Wickens is very fond of his leetle gal? What? Better send them back to Honolulu when we strike the reef. The mate can take the ship down and call back for us."

Beneath his breath the captain said: "Rat!" Aloud he said: "Certainly, sir."

Three hours later, every one on board was shaking with apprehension. They were within the zone. Every one—no, not every one—was urging imagination to the breaking point. Judd Wickens was in his cabin, watching the tiny flame of his child's life flicker out. The heart within his little body was racing; the small eyes were standing far out of their sockets; tears were flowing down the freckled cheeks. He heard the rushing of feet on the deck above, but he paid no heed; he heard the captain shouting orders, but he couldn't distinguish a single word; he heard the man in the "crow's nest" yell: "Land ahead!" but it conveyed nothing to him.

The little heart was breaking as surely as the waves were breaking on the coral reef ten miles ahead.

The rushing of feet became an obsession; it seemed to him that the whole world was laughing at his grief and dancing over the grave of his child; he fumed like a man insane; he paced the

floor of the narrow cabin, his hands clenched, his eyes blazing. The girl was coughing and fainting—fainting and gasping for breath. The mate dashed down the companion ladder and banged on the door of the cabin.

"The reef's in sight, old man!" he shouted.

And the poor little red-headed man yelled back:

"To hell with the reef—and you!"

They lowered her over the side an hour before sunset, and they lowered the heart of the little red-headed man with her. He never spoke a word from the time the captain mumbled through the burial service till the mate crept to his side and whispered:

"I know what you're going through, old fellow."

Then he said: "Get out of my sight!" and said it gruffly as if he were ready to follow it up with a blow.

The reef was barren—and so was the lagoon. The captain said that he might be a few square miles out of his reckoning, and there were hundreds of reefs in the vicinity.

At midnight—two days after they had lowered the body of the little girl over the side—the captain said to the mate as he came down from the bridge:

"I'm fed up with this business. I don't believe there is a treasure; I don't believe that devil, Wickens, believes that there's a treasure."

"Look!" said the mate, pointing to the stern of the ship where the small figure of the ex-convict was poised, his face to the wake.

"He doesn't seem to care a rap," said the captain.

The mate laughed—that bitter laugh of his.

"Care!" he echoed. "Of course, he doesn't care—now. I've knowed it from the first."

"Knowed what?" the captain said suspiciously.

The mate choked back a sob.

"Knowed that the only treasure in his mind was the treasure we dropped overboard a while back."

The captain blinked as if he wasn't sure that his mate had not taken leave of his senses. Then he said:

"What about the chart?"

The mate sneered:

"Forged! And forged by the cleverest forger that ever did a 'stretch.' He had to get a sea trip for the little gal, and he got it. 'Tweren't no use. His luck was out."

"Good God!" said the captain breathlessly.

"It was a big idea," said the mate admiringly, "and if there's going to be

any kick against the little man, he can count on Jimmy Hollywell to stand by him."

The captain telegraphed to the engine room. He cleared his throat.

"I guessed it was a fake two days ago," he said. "But, by Heaver, it was a big idea! Anyway, the syndicate took a chance, didn't they? They'd have robbed him if there had been any goods, wouldn't they? Hollywell—go to the little beggar—bring him to my cabin. Damme! How this wind gets into a fellow's eyes!"



A TRANSFORMATION

LOW and thin the wind sang, dim the mountains showed,
Blurred drums the hoofs rang, down the beaten road;
Five of us, for royal sport, find, and kill, and follow,
Renegades from Cupid's court, bound for Rocky Hollow.

Reins loose, dogs at heel, we rode through gay October,
In heady airs that made you feel 'twere sinful to look sober,
Made us know the man joy—mastery through striving,
In face of it nor man nor boy could spare a thought for wiving.

Or so we said and so sang, what time we rode together,
Holloaing till the world rang in the golden weather;
The morning it was all too short, the foxes all too plenty—
You quickly get your fill of sport when you are five and twenty.

Or was it this? The wildest fox that ever broke from cover,
Ran doubling through woolly flocks that flecked a mead of clover,
In charge of shepherdesses such as Watteau never painted—
Miss us? Not on your life! Not much! Tom Gallon almost fainted.

The rest? There isn't any rest. In couples we went homing,
Each with the lass he loved the best, and penitent for roaming.
The wise old fox had shown us clear—his wisdom was so plenty—
The best of sport's to hunt a dear when you are five and twenty.

MARTHA McCULLOCH-WILLIAMS.

CUPID'S STEEPLECHASE



BY ALICE MAC GOWAN

BOLDWOOD'S great frame was gaunt; his hawk's eye burned resentfully beneath the slant brow; his powerful, sinewy fingers trembled, as they held pressed to his bosom—a hot-water bag!

Darkly that smoldering gaze traveled out through the window and across the sweep of lawn. There, beneath a dazzle of California sunshine, amid a riot of color and perfume, Theodora walked on the velvety turf—with the doctor! And if poor Jim could but have heard what Doctor Hadley was uttering at the moment, it might have done for him what all else had so far failed to accomplish.

"Come, dear," the eager, urgent tones were close at the girl's ear, "say the word. End this miserable situation—that's doing him no good, either—and make us all happy."

The matter stood thus: Jim Boldwood, owner of a Texas Panhandle ranch that was like a small kingdom, had been brought in from the round-up one day badly smashed, and twenty miles from a doctor, only a few weeks before the date set for his marriage with Theodora Hamilton. He had not been able to believe that he would ever be a well man again—he who had never known a day's illness in his life. In a passion of despair, he had fairly cast Theodora's freedom at her. She had as passionately refused, crying:

"No, no, don't say it, Jim! You

can't set me free—nor I—nor anybody. I'm yours—yours. And you're mine, now and always. Only more so if you're sick and need me."

It had terrified the girl to see Jim, big, hard-muscled athlete that he was, sound as a wild animal, go down, horse, foot, and dragoons, before the very array and appurtenances of illness. Watching, she had known that that sound body of his had quickly healed itself, that only his ailing nerves were keeping up a seeming malady. Yet for six months the warfare had gone on, Jim now supine, at the mercy of his pains and disabilities, now raging, defiant, struggling to break away. Those six months had wrought their sinister change in him, despite the valiant bursts of spirit, the sudden spurts of pluck. At the end of them, when he had again, half sullenly, professed Teddy freedom, her rejection had been less fiery, and tinged by a discouragement that lacked little of his own despair.

That evening Boldwood's foreman had ridden in to Amarillo—where Theodora's aunt, the wealthy Mrs. Otis, was living at the time, and where Jim had come for medical care—to see his employer. After the interview, he had said to Theodora, with cattle-country freedom:

"Gosh! It gets me where I live, to see the boy like that."

Teddy had caught the gauntleted hand and wrung it.

"Oh, Tex!" she had choked. "Do you think he can't—he won't—he's going to—"

"Sure not," heartily. "Tain't that. The ain't a damn—that is, the's blamed little the matter with Jim, right now. All he needs is to be pulled out of the molly-grubs. A good scare'd bring him to hisself. If I had him out in camp with a herd of longhorns, I'd jest about flap a-blanket and start 'em going. Jim'd forget all about this sickness business in two shakes." He had wheeled suddenly to the girl. "Miss Theodora, why don't *you* throw a scare into him?"

"Oh—I—I wouldn't dare—"

"Yes, you would—it couldn't do no harm, and it stands to do some good. Lope in and tell him you're sick of this sort of thing—that you're going to take the other man—I know you've got a string of 'em."

Theodora had brooded on the suggestion for days. She had ventured finally a mild version of Tex's plan; but either she hadn't known how to apply it, or it had been the wrong medicine. Jim had only raised to her eyes of shamed suffering, and groaned:

"Lord, you're a thousand times right, Theodora! The quicker you quit me and take—whoever he is—the better for you."

She had run to him, put her arms around him, and cried long and silently on his breast—and that had been the end of it.

Now they had both been here at Castellamar, Doctor Hadley's sanitarium in southern California, for six weeks. Boldwood had come first, and a little later Theodora had arrived, dragging her reluctant aunt. The latter had promptly surrendered to Doctor Hadley's charms, and embarked upon certain cures on her own account. As for the doctor, it was plain from the first that he had fallen head over ears in love with Theodora.

"I wish I could be more encouraging, Miss Hamilton," Doctor Hadley had said to Theodora, in their first talk on Jim's case. "I can't tell you how sorry I am."

"Thank you," Teddy had choked.

"You needn't be told that I'll do all that's possible. Boldwood's a splendid fellow. He'd win one's utmost efforts on his own behalf. But—I sometimes dread—I feel—from the friend's point of view, that it would almost be a mercy—"

He had left the sentence unfinished. His gaze had traveled, in distress and embarrassment, to the wing where abode those neurasthenic patients who had passed the line of sanity.

Teddy had looked on the ground that he might not see the tears.

"It's only honest to tell you," the voice had been kind, reluctant, "that the tendency toward melancholia is one of the hardest in the world to check."

He had said no more that day. The proprietor of Castellamar was a cautious man, though no laggard wooer. He might be forty years old, and a widower, but he knew how to push a suit with fire and eagerness, where to recede adroitly and where to press home an advantage. Before she had been at the sanitarium a month, he was urging the girl warmly to marry him out of hand and end the miserable situation that was stealing her youth and freshness. He had watched keenly to catch just the mood of discouragement in her that would find a mirage of rescue, of peace, in his proffered love and protection.

To-day, while Jim sat at the window and looked forth where Doctor Hadley walked with Theodora on the green turf, the widower was putting that very matter to her—and putting it well.

"Say yes, dear—only say yes," was his conclusion. "Then we can ride round by Escobedo, and—"

They passed into an avenue lined with pepper trees, and so out of sight.

And Boldwood, within, was pitifully busy, as through all the past weeks, fighting those phantoms of the man whose mind is sick. Wretched trifles they would have seemed to the Jim Boldwood of a year ago, as, item: a Swedish attendant by the name of Petersen, who had, in the invalid's eyes, accumulated a collection of incom-

pitable malignancies that would have strained the hide of a giant of wickedness; item: the voluminous and protecting bath robe that, at the doctor's orders, wrapped Jim during the sun hour on porch or lawn; item: a hostility that seemed to set itself up between his interior and the "portions" of pre-digested food that were dosed out to him. These things troubled all life's surface for him. Deep under their importunate bark lay one mighty ache, half asleep, that stirred and started at the voice or footfall of Theodora, the sight of her riding almost daily with Hadley—and drowsed sullenly again.

He was sitting in his wheel chair on the side porch, Colonel Page, of Kentucky, who suffered from sciatica, nursing a bandaged foot farther down the veranda, when the girl came out, dressed for a ride.

"Ah, there, Hebe!" the little Kentuckian called gayly. "If I didn't have too heavy a handicap this morning, I'd give you a run for the money myself."

Theodora smiled at her game old admirer, but the glance was gray with hopelessness when it came back to Boldwood. He sat in the despised liver of submission, his head bent, yet with an ugly gleam in his eyes—for she had sent more than one goading word his way that morning. He was nursing his hot-water bag truculently.

"Peach of a day for a gallop, isn't it?" she gave him a chance, ramming both hands into her sweater pockets.

"God—yes!" Boldwood groaned inaudibly, and the look of a baited bear swept the fair Californian landscape on which the amorous sun glow lay. He brooded on it for a moment. Then, in a suppressed voice, he asked:

"Are you riding with Hadley again? Not that it's any of my business."

The red flashed from Theodora's soft white collar to the ruffle of fair hair above her brow. She clenched her hands in her pockets, and came forward a step, stooping to look squarely into his face.

"You say that, Jim—do you? I'm none of your business—well!"

The gleam in Boldwood's eyes grew

almost to a glare, yet it seemed directed toward something other than the girl. It was a phantom—the phantom of his own condition—upon which he fixed that raging regard.

"I only said that it wasn't any of my business whom you went riding with," he explained huskily.

"I can't go riding with *you*, can I?" demanded the girl, and he sat appalled.

"Of course I—understand that riding with Hadley doesn't mean anything," he halted.

"You do—do you?" poor Teddy cut in; a mingling of hot emotions shook in her voice. She drew her breath sharply, and staked all on one thrust—if anything of her Jim Boldwood was left, it would rise to this: "Well, it may mean a whole lot. I suppose you think I'll spend the rest of my days dangling around after Aunt Ruth—a cross between an upper servant and a pet poodle. I won't!" It was almost a sob. "I've got to have some life, whether you want any or not."

She watched for any response to the blow. Boldwood's hand gripped the hot-water bag, which glugged idiotically. No, he wasn't going to show fight—only a sort of pained, stupid surprise.

"You don't want to be tied for life to an invalid," he was saying. "You're hot in the collar right now about your sick aunt—and I'd be a fat lot worse. Hadley tells me—" His voice trailed off into silence.

Well, to make an end of it—kill or cure:

"Doctor Hadley tells you to keep a hot-water bag applied to the region of digestion for an hour after food! You follow his instructions. There are no amusements that interest me, Jim, that you could take part in and bring a hot-water bag along. Good-by."

She dashed stormily down the steps and joined the gallant Hadley on the lawn; they mounted and rode away.

Boldwood was left sitting in his wheel chair. Colonel Page, at the other end of the porch, unfolded his *Sportsman and Breeder*, and rattled it, to advertise that he had heard nothing of

the conversation. He began to read aloud to the unresponsive Texan sundry items of turf interest, but gave it up presently in favor of a nap, for the big man had gone into some far, somber region where racing news could not penetrate. What could, and did, pierce this place of sorrow and despite, some quarter of an hour later, was Petersen's voice replying rudely to some information in feminine tones.

"Going to be married? Come off! What would they run away for, when the old woman's willing, and the other fellow's down and out?"

It came through the window at his back, and Boldwood heard it clearly.

"Because of the girl, stupid," returned the female voice, which Boldwood recognized as that of Mrs. Otis' attendant, Amelia. "Hadley's been at her for a week and more to have him; but she's sweet on the other one. Snap judgment and a runaway match—that's the only way for the doctor to get her. I tell you I heard the madam and him frame it up."

Colonel Page, dozing behind the *Sportsman and Breeder*, leaped suddenly upright in his wheel chair, his cane clattering to the floor, Boldwood's bellow of rage, which had torn him from slumber, still ringing in his ears:

"Petersen, come here!"

The Swede fell through the French window, his face the color of dirty paper as he confronted this patient who seemed to have gone suddenly across the line and become dangerous. Boldwood was on his feet; a long arm shot out, and a big hand gathered up an entire Swedish shoulder, pulling the frightened Petersen forward as a cat would drag a mouse. The colonel, staring, breathed heavily through distended nostrils.

"Say that again!" Boldwood commanded. "Let's have that stuff about Miss Hamilton and Doctor Hadley again!"

The wretched attendant yammered denials. Boldwood cut him short.

"Don't lie to me. Say it over, and say it quick!"

Petersen cast a terrified look at his

captor's face, squirming a bit where the big paw clutched. Without further ado, he recited the information that Amelia had conveyed to him—that the doctor and Miss Hamilton were to ride to San Pablo, where they could get a license and be married.

"By gad!" the Kentuckian whispered. "By gad!" And, reaching down, he picked up his cane from the floor. "The little girl's throwing the gaff in him—and I believe it will turn the trick."

Through narrowed eyes, he studied his companion, who stood trembling, but with head lifted, shoulders back, squared up on wide-planted feet. Boldwood, a firm grip still on the Swede, swept a glance over the hitching rack at the edge of the lawn, where there were a couple of vehicles, their horses half asleep, and one saddled animal, a lanky, leggy, ungroomed, white-faced sorrel.

"Petersen," he said, in a new voice, looking down at his garb. "I can't go in this infernal bed gown. Get my coat and vest. And notice this—if you open your head about me to any one on the p'ace, I'll kill you!"

He relaxed his clutch, and the trembling fingers of one hand strove to untie the bath-robe cord; from long habit the other automatically held the hot-water bottle against his bosom.

With a sudden thought, "Wait a minute," he called after the Swede.

Petersen turned.

"Get me a drink of whisky first—and be quick about it."

"Oh, Mr. Boldwood!" gasped the attendant. "Whisky! Why, alcohol's poison to you in your condition, sir. It'd be as much as my life's worth."

"It's a fat lot more'n your life's worth," growled the rebel. "You dig up a drink of whisky for me."

"Let him go, boy," crowed the colonel. "Let him go. He can't get any. I'll give you a drink." He fumbled in the draperies that swathed his chair, reached his hip pocket, and hauled out a small leather flask. "God knows," he said, with feeling, "it's the last drop, and I've had to sneak and lie to get it.

But He knows you're welcome to it, son. Come on!"

Boldwood reached him in four strides, grasped the flask, and turned its contents down his throat. Petersen gave one glance, and melted away. From a distant corridor came the loud clang of a bell, and, as Boldwood brought his glance back to the level again, he saw, through the open doorway, the scudding figure of Amelia. The colonel saw, too.

"Git, boy!" he hissed. "Never mind your sad rags. Scoot!"

Warmed by the colonel's liquor, stimulated by his adjuration, Boldwood plunged toward the hitching rack and that sorrel horse. But even as he went, there came running around the corner of the house a short, thickset attendant with an egg-shaped head and large, flat-looking, blue eyes, whom Theodora had nicknamed Humpty Dumpty. With an inspired impulse, Boldwood dragged from his bosom the forgotten hot-water bag and slammed it hard in the oncoming face. It burst. Humpty Dumpty rolled backward off the porch, yelling, his big, fat-bodied, German oaths bubbling out amid steam and fluid, like some new sort of geyser.

"Run, man, run!" the colonel yelped, pounding the floor excitedly with his cane. "Git for your horse! Here they come!" as a clatter of nearing footsteps sounded within. "Climb that brute, and mizzle—I'll take care of these demned tarrapins. *Slide!*"

The tall figure, in its flapping robe, leaped down the steps. Not far beyond where the horses stood, a rosy-faced, sandy-haired little chap, whom they called "Pinky," was mowing the lawn; a good little soul, of somewhat flimsy anatomy, but kind and human. Boldwood had several times vainly endeavored to exchange the detested Petersen for Pinky. Pinky had seen what had taken place on the porch, and, though scared, now relaxed his grasp of the lawn mower, and advanced heroically to intercept the madman.

Boldwood reached the rack ahead of him, jerked the lines from the post, and was in the act to mount, when Pinky,

trembling but game, was at his heels, yapping:

"No, Mr. Boldwood, don't do it! You'll make yourself sick. Come on now, sir. Be a good boy! Stay with Pinky."

They clinched. Boldwood thrust the little fellow aside, and jumped on the sorrel. But Pinky—spitting out turf and gravel—was up and at him as he wheeled for the gate. He grabbed the bath robe with both hands, calling upon Boldwood in terms of blandishing endearment to stay with him, Pinky, and be a good boy.

"Leggo—you fool!" cried the Texan. "I don't want to hurt you."

"I'll never let go," declared Pinky.

"Suit yourself—come along then." And Boldwood kicked the sorrel savagely in the ribs with the other foot.

They plunged toward the gate, Pinky clinging to the bath robe like nothing on earth but a prehensile yell, traveling in great strides. The swinging gate took him off, with a prodigious grunt that sounded like the deflating of a pneumatic tire—and the fugitive was free!

As horse and rider went through, leaving Pinky collapsed on the gravel, the hullabaloo broke out in the house. Four or five attendants burst onto the porch at the end where the colonel sat. He was ready for them. Out shot the hooked cane, its handle catching the leader around the ankle. With amazed and indignant outcry he went down, and those following piled up on him, while Humpty Dumpty, who had risen blind and stark mad, came weaving over to add himself and his excited German to the general confusion.

"Four down!" piped the colonel, in shameless delight. "Whoop! Set 'em up in the other alley!"

The departing horseman waved to him as he rounded a curve into the open road, short stirrups clattering against the unkempt sorrel sides. At the first turn, Boldwood gave a hasty glance back over his shoulder. No entries in the pursuit as yet. He made a quick survey of the country ahead, wheeled his mount, and took across the

fields. His plan was to ride the arc of the semicircle that Theodora and Hadley were fetching by the route that they were following toward San Pablo. If his horse held good, he could intercept them about a mile the hither side of town.

"If I only had Blue Dick here now!" he groaned, leaning over to one side to have a look at the scraggy thing he bestrode. The brute flared the white of its eye back at him in a way that gave him hopes, and mended its pace.

"Whee! Go to it, old scout!" he cheered, fetching his hand down in a mighty slap on its quarter.

For a time the beast ran free, pelting diagonally down athwart a long slope. The sharp rise beyond he breasted pluckily. Before he reached the top of the hill, he began to breathe aloud, and the sweat came out on him; but he held his pace.

They were three miles from the sanitarium. Not once had such a thing as his physical condition entered Boldwood's mind—he had had room for but one thought—how to reach Theodora most quickly. But now, all at once, ecstasy swept in upon him, and he bawled his triumph to the backward-fleeting chaparral.

"*I'm well!* I'm a well man! God bless her heart—she was right! I only needed to get up and *be well!*"

He entered thick woods, and the sorrel began to slacken speed.

"Hi, there, you four-flusher!" Boldwood anxiously reproached it. "None o' that. What do you think you're in for? This is a finish race. You're not going to quit yet. *I'm well!*"

He made a motion to grab off a big Stetson and slap it on the horse's neck. No hat was there. He gathered up a handful of his gown, and executed a loud flop across the beast's flanks. It shot ahead, terror of the bedlamite on its back lending it fresh speed. They broke out of the woods, skimmed along an open space, then plunged through a cornfield. Some children playing in front of a little ranch house leaped up and scuttled inside like scared mice, screeching:

"Maw—maw—look what's riding through our corn!"

Boldwood heard the female shrill: "Lord A'mighty! It's a woman—no 'tain't! What is it?"

He had no time to stop and explain, to elucidate his errand, to defend his sex or his methods. The scene faded swiftly from view. He came once more to open country, struck into a road, followed it for a hundred yards—when it forked unexpectedly. He chose the left hand. The beast seemed reluctant, and edged persistently in the other direction.

"All right, old Whiteface," he roared. "You know as much as I do. Your road, then."

Before he knew it, Boldwood was riding between barbed-wire fences.

"Say, this doesn't look good to me," he babbled.

But the horse held strongly forward, turned a corner around a group of great live oaks, and burst with an awkward flourish into an inclosure flanked by a low ranch house, haystacks, and outbuildings, where he made straight for the open doorway of a big red barn. Boldwood wrenched him to a sudden and violent halt, just as a tall, stooped man with a sunburned beak of a nose emerged, leading a solemn white mule. The mule broke back with a snort, and the man shouted at the intruder indignantly, as the halter rope tore through his hands:

"Hey! What the mischief you tryin' to do? Wha'd ye mean?"

"For God's sake, tell me how to get out of here!" clamored Boldwood. "Which is the straight road to San Pablo?"

"Git out o' here the way ye got in," rasped the beak-nosed man, with good color for his irritation. He hauled his reluctant mule forward. "They ain't no straight road to San Pablo. You've got to go up round—" He stopped short, then bawled excitedly: "Darn your hide! What ye doin' with my sorrel hoss?"

The blow was sudden. It momentarily bereft Boldwood of reason. He leaned out sidewise and looked

stupidly down at the animal, even as he wheeled it in its tracks.

"Sorrel horse!" he echoed vaguely. "Your sorrel horse!"

Without a word, the beaked one grasped a pitchfork and jumped into the open gateway.

"You git off'n that hoss!" he ordered.

Boldwood flashed a swift look about the inclosure. The proprietor's eye followed his.

"Ner ye can't jump the fence, neither. He ain't no jumper."

Precious moments were passing. Boldwood looked southward, then at the man in the gate, pitchfork and all—and gathered up his reins. The other saw what was coming, and lifted his voice.

"Hey, ma!"

The house door was flung open, and a little thin woman with a gay, fat fiction magazine in her hand, stood revealed, wisps of gray hair blowing about her soft, blue eyes.

"Yes, pa?"

"Madam," cried Boldwood desperately, before pa had time to state the case from his point of view, "another fellow has run off with my girl. He's trying to marry her at San Pablo this minute. I don't want to have your husband jab a pitchfork through me. I don't want to kill him. For God's sake, get him to stand out of the gate! I'll pay for the horse. I've got to get there!"

The little old woman dropped the magazine, and stumbled over it.

"In—in them clo'es?" she faltered, advancing, eying the bath robe.

But the man with the pitchfork stood pat.

"You'll git to jail—that's where you'll git," he declared.

"Keep still, pa," said the mild little woman. She came close to the tall figure on the horse and lifted those faded, wistful eyes. "It's your girl?" she asked softly.

"Yes, she's mine. She's mine—and she needs me mighty bad, right now."

"Is she—is she beautiful?" ma questioned again, bashful, yet eager. "Does she love you awful much?"

Boldwood's heart melted to her. Turning his back on pa at the gateway, he laid his fate in her hands in one long, incandescent sentence of about twenty-four clauses. And he was well inspired.

"Yes—yes—yes," assented ma, with feverish ardor, nodding her gray head like an amiable little mandarin. This was the most thrilling serial she had ever encountered. "Yes, I see. Well," with sudden energy, "you're a-goin' to get her if Baldy can make it."

"Not on my hoss, he ain't," the husband put in firmly, still holding his pitchfork level.

"Joshuay," ma turned on him, raking up ancient history, as women will at unexpected junctures, "Joshuay, I've raised nine sons for you—nine sons. An' you had your ruthers with all of 'em." Her voice shook. "I work hard, and it's mighty little I ever ask of you. I earn the money I spend for story papers. But I'm goin' to have my way now. Baldy belongs to me. I raised him same as I did the boys. He most chawed my finger off when I was learnin' him to drink milk. You've took your will of him so fur; but—you get out of that gate, Pa Strickland."

"Why, Liza," pa faltered, lowering the pitchfork in amazement. "Why, Liza!"

He fell back, but the little old woman was not noticing him.

As Boldwood urged the reluctant sorrel through the gate, she sped him with: "Good-by, sonny. I wish ye luck—and happiness."

"Good-by—mother," he shouted back over his shoulder. "God bless you! I'll bring her to see you some day."

The sorrel struck his stride, and the race was on once more.

"Colt," and for the first time Boldwood leaned over and patted its stringy neck, "you win for me, and you'll never have to carry anybody again as long as you live. Do you get that?"

The beast snorted back at him.

"Ma Strickland and I'll fix it," Boldwood urged. "Come on, now!"

Baldy came. A small bungalow flashed past him, a group of wondering

people on its porch. A red cow with a speckled calf made a rosy streak as they sheered close by her, for the going was good and a little down grade. So they covered a mile or more. A Mexican cutting wood by the roadside straightened up as the hard-driven horse came upon him. He took one startled look at what rode the creature, and crossed himself hurriedly, muttering, "Holy Virgin!"

The road reached an eminence, and Boldwood caught his first glimpse, across a pretty valley, of San Pablo, asleep in the afternoon sun. He saw the red tiles of the mission roof, the little streets of low, Oriental-looking adobes, the outlying vineyards.

For the first time the thought of failure came into his mind. Could it be that Hadley had beaten him, after all? He thrust the doubt from him, set his teeth grimly, and whirled Baldy toward the side of the road, jumping the tired beast at the ditch—down across the slope was the cut-off. The sorrel came short. He pawed frantically, but ineffectually, for a moment at the crumbling bank, then horse and rider rolled together into the gully.

Together they scrambled out, and stood there, trembling. Boldwood, as mute as the animal, picked weeds and gravel from his hair, and wiped his hand across his face to clear his eyes of dust, carrying long, crimson smears from a scratch on his cheek. He waited, breathing hard, for a brief space, then went to Baldy, clambered doggedly into the saddle, and rode straight across the rough down, jumping lupine bushes, narrowly missing gopher holes and washouts.

A mile of this, and the panting horse topped a bank and broke abruptly upon the wide, dusty road that entered San Pablo. It was empty as a road in a dream. Words burst from Boldwood—they might have been a curse or a prayer. He had failed. There ahead was the sleepy little Spanish town. Those whom he was following had reached it first. Yet he did not stop, but pounded on, with his eyes on the square, flanked by the old 'dobe court-

house and the mission, its ancient fountain in the center overhung by blooming pepper trees.

He came into full view. Yes, there they were, dismounted, a Mexican boy holding the horses. With an involuntary movement, Boldwood drove his heels into the sorrel's flanks again, and the brute made one last spurt. Hadley was standing close to the girl; her lover could see the look with which she drew back, disturbed, and the open curiosity and interest of the natives who were hanging about the pair at a respectful distance.

He was in time!

At sound of the horse, Teddy raised her head; Hadley swung around. Blank amazement swept his countenance; action perished in him, and he forgot to close his mouth. Small wonder; for bearing down on them was the maddest apparition that ever showed itself outside of a nightmare. Boldwood's face showed white as paper between streaks of blood; the blue-flowered gown whipped in the wind; the long black hair of his illness fell about a pair of burning eyes. The foam-spattered, streaming brute that he rode lurched as it came on.

"Whoop—ee—ee!" yodeled the fantastic, hitting the horse a final slap with a handful of bath robe. "Whoo—oo! Who—ee—ee! Theo-do-o-o-ra!"

The girl's heart leaped to answer that virile call.

"Jim! Oh, Jim!" was all she said.

The native contingent—some old men, a couple of girls, several urchins—drew closer together and stared. The sorrel careened wildly to one side. Chickens, dogs, and Mexicans scattered, squalling and barking, as his rider hauled him up not six feet from the doctor and the girl. Boldwood rolled from the saddle, and stood with one lean hand twisted hard in the ragged mane. He grinned joyously at Theodore, and pulled himself up straighter, fetching a big breath.

Hadley met him eye to eye. Whatever the doctor's inward misgivings, the front he presented was one of high assurance.

"Well, sir?" he said coldly.

Boldwood answered not a word, but stared straight back into his rival's face, then turned and smiled once more at the girl.

The unaccustomed red showed on Hadley's cheek. Stung out of his maintained composure, he broke forth:

"Mr. Boldwood, such a performance as this may cost more than your life. You're in my charge. I must do my best for you. But I'm here with a lady. There's no reason why Miss Hamilton should be subjected to annoyance." He turned to the girl. "If you'll sit for a few minutes on that seat over there," he suggested, "and you, boy, walk the horses up and down, I'll take Mr. Boldwood right across to the livery stable and—"

Boldwood laughed softly, and the doctor stopped with some abruptness.

"Ah-h-h, no—not you, Hadley! You won't 'take Mr. Boldwood' anywhere."

Theodora's eyes had never left her lover's face; they grew radiant now. Boldwood turned from the sorrel's shoulder, and stepped slowly toward Hadley, his own eyes dancing.

"Doc," he said, a hand fluttering tenderly toward the other's coat collar, "you needn't stay any longer. I'm here now. The lady and I can attend to this marrying business."

Hadley turned to the bystanders.

"This man's a patient from Castelamar. He's escaped from his attendants—Look at him!"

"Drop it!" Boldwood put in savagely. "Cut that out! You can see I'm a well man. I'm as well as I ever was. I meant what I said. Theodora?"

"Miss Hamilton," appealed Hadley, and perhaps with more sincerity than might have been believed, "you see—don't you?—that what I warned you of has come. He may get beyond himself at any moment. Help me to control him. We must get him to go home—and—er—lie down."

For answer, Theodora came over and put a hand in Boldwood's. She never looked at Hadley.

"The man's crazy," choked her disappointed suitor. "Look at him! I'll

telephone your aunt! I'll summon the police!"

"Will you?" murmured Boldwood, a smile on his ensanguined visage.

The bunch of Mexicans swayed and vibrated; it churned with joy like a boiling teapot.

Hadley turned toward the drug store. Boldwood dropped Theodora's hand, and sprang after. With one movement, he tore off his blue gown, flung it over the doctor's head and shoulders, and twisted its cords round and round.

"Hi-yah!" approved the Mexicans. "Viva! *No te dejes!*"

There was a scuffle. The two fetched up hard against the horse trough, and the hoodwinked one instantly and forcibly sat down in it, while the Mexicans went wild with joy.

"Bien! *Muy bien!*" chuckled an old man.

"Viva!" laughed a señora with a rebozo over her head. "Viva! De feesh sween!"

"Teddy," said Boldwood, grasping the girl's hand once more, "in about two minutes the sanitarium cohorts'll be along. I tipped things over back there, and the whole shooting match is out after me. Across yonder's the county clerk's office. We can be married before they get here—if you're game."

Teddy looked her bridegroom up and down; coatless, vestless, hatless; soiled, bloody, disheveled; tarweed in his hair; his feet in bedroom slippers—yet all a man.

"Oh, I am, Jim!" she said.

Hand clasped in hand, he and Theodora ran like a couple of children across the square, and burst, an eruption of youth, and light, and noise, into the dusky, silent room where a little old Spaniard with grizzled mustachios and bright eyes sat at a desk. He rose in astonishment, bowing to the lady and her singular companion.

"We want a marriage license—quick! You are the clerk?"

"I am the clerk," reaching for a blank.

"They're chasing us," contributed Boldwood, while the other wrote hastily and asked the necessary ques-

tions. "I don't reckon they're ten minutes' behind. Who'll marry us?"

"They chase—they shall not catch." The Spaniard scratched away for dear life. "Like—ah—department store, 'we do all under one roof.' José!"

A door at the back opened; a head, surmounted by a black pompadour, popped inquiringly in. Still writing, the old man gave swift directions in Spanish. The head drew back, and a moment later another bright-eyed, dark-skinned little man appeared, carrying a book, and followed by an old crone and a young girl.

"*Pronto, José!* You marry—I finish the license," ejaculated the old clerk.

"*Ya estamos listos!* Join your right hands," cried the justice. "Señor—

"Boldwood," supplied the groom.

"Señor Bol'wood, you take dees-ah—woman—"

The roll of vehicles sounded without, and loud, excited voices. The little justice's eyes sparkled.

"I do!" ejaculated Boldwood.

"Señorita—"

"Hamilton!" The girl fairly threw it at him.

"You take dees-ah man—" the justice gabbed, an ear cocked toward the door.

Teddy cut him short with a fervent "I do!"

Above the general babble outside, soared Colonel Page's carrying tones:

"Hold, Bob! Crowd in close there. Whoa, Pet—whoa!"

Teddy clung to her shirt-sleeved bridegroom, looking anxiously toward the front.

"But, doctor, she went riding with you!" Mrs. Otis' voice rose in a thin wail.

Teddy gave a little nervous shiver.

"Steady, dear," whispered Boldwood.

The outer clamor increased. The justice broke off in the middle of a sentence and slapped shut his book.

"*Aquí vienen!*" he cried. "They come. *Ya está!* It is done. I produce you mans and wifes!"

"Is that all?" gasped the startled bride.

Boldwood thrust a gold piece into

the pompadoured one's palm, another toward the clerk, turned, and caught Teddy in his arms and kissed her.

"It's enough," he declared. "Now, let 'em come!"

"One minute!" cried the little clerk.

He ran before, and with a dramatic gesture threw open the heavy door, ushering them out, the justice following eagerly, book still in hand, the old woman and the girl fetching up the rear—an unmistakable wedding party.

Across the front steps, like a barricade, was drawn a light spider buggy; Colonel Page's yellow Bob, grinning, held the lines over the sweat-streaked roan between the shafts. The colonel himself stood up on one foot in the vehicle, his bandaged leg propped on the cushions of its seat. He gesticulated with both hands and harangued the group before him. Beyond, in a carryall, sat Mrs. Otis, hastily clad, disheveled, tearful, supported by Amelia, who looked very uneasy.

Over his shoulder, Page caught sight of the emerging pair, and wheeled.

"There they are, now!" he called out. "Look at 'em!"

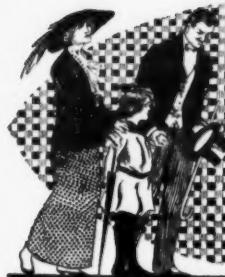
Mrs. Otis sniffed. Hadley climbed silently into the carryall. He leaned forward and poked the staring driver, who reluctantly started his horses. The vehicle began to move away.

"Hi—hold on there!" the colonel commanded, in a voice that brought them to a standstill. "Bob"—to the yellow boy—"help me across to that Noah's Ark. Boldwood, you and the bride get into my buggy. I'll go back in the carryall."

Boldwood lifted Teddy to the buggy and stepped in after her. The Mexicans pressed back to make way for them. As the crowd parted, a half dozen brown-faced children, their hands full of flowers, burst through, pelting horse, vehicle, and occupants with a rain of blossoms, crying:

"*Flores para la esposa!*"

With a movement so significant that it fairly seemed symbolical, Teddy meekly passed the lines over to her husband.



Going Back

BY
Thomas Addison

AS Evans took Sidney Elliott's hat and coat, he said:

"Mrs. Elliott has called you up twice, sir; the last time twenty minutes ago."

Elliott nodded, a little impatiently, and walked on into his library. He glanced at the telephone, stopped uncertainly, then turned away and threw himself into a chair facing the fire. Of what avail would be a talk with Grace? They were rid of each other at last. After weeks of suits and counter suits, the bickerings of lawyers, the babblings of witnesses, the pages of newspaper gossip, the mouthing of their names by a million of idle tongues—they were free!

The clock on the mantel pointed to nine. It chimed before striking the hour, playing softly the first bars of "Sweet Hour of Prayer." Elliott's mother had given him the clock—an old-fashioned, God-fearing mother long since at rest. The liquid notes fell upon the stillness of the great room like faint echoings of a celestial voice, and the man stirred in his chair. In the rush and rancor of these last days, in the hurling back and forth of criminations and recriminations, in the stress and turmoil of the legal battle, he had not taken time to think. He had plunged ahead in the darkness of his own mean desires, reckless of all ends but the one he sought—the custody of his only child.

And he had failed of this. Grace, too, had failed. He had besmirched her fair fame, and she had besmirched

his. They had held each other up for the world to jeer at; had made a mock of marriage and its holy office.

Between two such pitiable pictures of parenthood the child was to choose. The court had so ordained. The decree was awarded to the wife, not because her deserts were greater, but because her guilt was less. But the court, hesitating between two evils, would not award the custody of the child; it would not undertake a responsibility so fraught with chance. The child herself must make her choice. She must decide, with what wisdom was given to her ten brief years, or with what Heaven-sent instinct the moment brought, whether to pass her life with a father who had denied her mother, or with a mother who had denied her father. To-morrow at ten o'clock, in the judge's chambers, little Rose was to be called upon to choose—to say which she loved the better, which her heart cried out for the more, which would satisfy her greatest need. It was left for her to decide!

Sidney Elliott was taking the time now to think, or, rather, the process was being forced on him. He had to think. There was nothing else left for him to do. He had played his last card and lost. Like every bankrupt gambler, he was looking back. He could see the mistakes that he had made, where he should have done this instead of that, and thus instead of so. But it was too late. The game was over. It could not be played again. His stake was gone. And yet he was free, master now of

his every movement. The woman he had married had no longer a single claim on him. What she did or where she went was no concern of his. Man had decreed it—man's law. God's law was not a statutory enactment; it did not rule the courts. He and Grace were emancipated, the one from the other. There remained only the child—

Elliott got up and began pacing the room from side to side. The question that he had sedulously striven to ignore, but that insistently demanded to be answered, would not longer wait. Was he free? Was Grace free? Was not their child a tie that they could not sever, a bond that no law of man could cancel or make void? She was a part of them, she walked in their image, she bore in her face the traits of each, her mind was a heritage from both. They had made her. She belonged not more to one than to the other. She was theirs in common—an indivisible whole.

It was monstrous to ask the child to choose between them, and yet they—her mother and her father—had brought her to this pass. They had fought for the possession of her body as wild beasts fight over the quarry that they have killed, though not with claws and teeth that merely rend the flesh—nothing so merciful as that; they had fought with scourging words that left their characters flayed and naked to the public gaze. And it had availed them naught—worse than that; they had pilloried their child to the pity of the world.

To-night Rose was motherless, fatherless, homeless. She was in a hotel with her governess, under guard of the court, a ban laid upon communication with her. She was not to be seen of any stranger, so the order ran, and in this category were placed the two who had given her life. She was there, alone, watched like a criminal, a paid attendant her only comfort and support. She was there, schooled to the task that lay before her in the morning, trying in dim, childish ways to make her choice, and crying out from her torn heart against the violation of the trusting love that was her birthright.

The sweat stood out on Elliott's brow. He stepped into the silent hall and looked around him, through open doors at right and left, and up the low, broad stairs down which a chariot could have been driven and have found itself uncramped. Everywhere were the evidences of Elliott's millions, and yet so little did all this count with him just then that no day laborer standing in the desert barrenness of his rented rooms could have felt less rich than he.

The stillness seemed to weigh on Elliott and bear him down. He caught himself listening for a clear young voice to hail him from the stair top—a laugh or shout of welcome. For Rose was no decorous little body with grown-up airs. Money had not smothered her, and flattened her out, and stamped her into an atrocious caricature of her elders. She was a healthy, natural child, and had been allowed to follow healthy, natural instincts. For this much at least—where so little else was due—her parents could take credit.

But no sound of laughter came to Elliott's ears. Rose was a prisoner in one hotel, her mother a marked guest at another, and he a solitary sojourner in a house that was no longer a home. A panic of loneliness seized and shook the man. He cursed the place aloud, and rang for Evans.

"Pack a bag and send it to the Stuyvesant Club," he directed. "I shall spend the night there."

Evans silently helped his master on with his coat. As he handed him his hat, the telephone gave its summons.

"Mrs. Elliott, perhaps, sir," hinted the butler. "She said she would call again."

Elliott frowned and strode into the library. He picked up the telephone.

"This is Sidney Elliott," he announced brusquely.

"This is Grace Elliott," was the reply.

There was a slight pause.

"Well, what is it, please?" demanded Elliott.

"Sidney, there is a thing I would like to talk with you about. Will you—

would it be possible for you to come over?"

"Madam," said Elliott, with elaborate politeness, "I can think of nothing that would warrant the interview. My attorney will be glad to talk with you in the morning."

She knew from his tone that he intended to close the circuit, and her voice came to him breathlessly importunate:

"Sidney! It's about Rose. To-morrow won't do. I must see you to-night—to-night!"

In the act of hanging up the receiver, Elliott hesitated.

"Rose?" he questioned. "Have you heard anything? Is she—is she ill?"

"I have heard nothing. What I have to say can't be conveyed in this way, and to-morrow will be too late. Will you grant me, Sidney, just five minutes of your time to-night? It is for Rose I ask it. Sidney—you do not answer! Are you there still? Sidney——"

"I will come," he told her tersely, and placed the receiver on its hook.

In the brief moment before the woman spoke, her eyes appraised the man—young still, prepossessing, headstrong, kind when not crossed, generous when not coerced; a selfish man, yet not unlovable.

And he subconsciously was appraising her—her undoubted beauty, her arrogance and unbridled will, her sweetness and appeal; a woman to be loved when the wind blew fair.

Each saw in that brief instant—as in a lightning flash—the other's self, and knew that the interposing barrier had been builded by their own perverse hands, which had piled intolerance on intolerance until patience lay buried far beneath. They knew it; but, still intolerant, would not make acknowledgment of their joint work. The lightning flash leaves darkness darker than before.

"This dreadful thing to-morrow—we must find a way to stop it!" exclaimed the woman.

"You can suggest a way, no doubt," returned Elliott ironically. "I have come prepared to listen."

She flushed slightly.

"I thought," she offered, "that we might consult about it."

"It seems to me the time for that has passed. We have been too busily engaged in other ways."

His tone deepened the flush on her face; but she made an effort to control herself.

"I would like," she said evenly, "to talk with you in a friendly spirit. It ought to be possible—now. We have done each other all the harm we could. There is no further injury I can inflict on you, or you on me. I thought that we might advise together on some way to spare our little girl the humiliation that faces her."

"I would give my right arm to do it," he answered shortly.

"I would give my life," she said.

At this he laughed.

"Excellent! We both are ready enough to give now, it appears. Unhappily, we are a trifle late; we should have exercised our generosity earlier. As matters stand, we are helpless. Judge Cabot cannot be shaken."

She shot a quick, curious glance at him.

"You have talked with Judge Cabot?"

"To-night."

"You tried to—to influence him?"

"Yes, I tried."

"In your favor?"

Elliott looked at her coldly.

"I made him a proposition," he replied. "He did not see fit to entertain it."

She moved her hand among the litter of notes and letters on the table by which she was standing, as if in search of something. It was a pretense to avoid his eyes.

"Did Judge Cabot mention that I talked with him—late this afternoon?" she asked.

"No." His voice betrayed a faint surprise, but he would not question her. Instead he said: "I was afraid that this interview would lead to nothing. We must take our chance—each of us. It rests with Rose."

He turned to the door, but she stopped him with a passionate outburst:

"Rose must be spared this cruel test! I tell you, Sidney, it must be brought about. I will go to any lengths to do it!"

Elliott wheeled and surveyed her with a bitter smile.

"If you had thought of this before, Grace—"

He finished with a shrug that whipped her into anger.

"If you had!" she retorted. "If you had thought of anything but yourself, we should not be where we are to-day. But from the beginning it has always been I that was wrong and you that were right. Always!"

Elliott retraced a step in her direction, still smiling cruelly.

"It is singular," he remarked, "that I should hold the diametrically opposite view. It is really odd."

"Oh, not at all!" she flung back at him. "You could never see but one side of the shield; and if you proclaimed it white, I must agree with you that my side was white. You set your wish up as my law, and because at last I grew tired and rebelled, you sought more complaisant companionship."

She drew a light gilt chair to her with a sudden movement, and, tilting it forward, leaned over it, and faced him as from behind a barricade. But it was as flimsy as the self-defense that she was setting up against his.

"Your own quest wasn't delayed very long," drawled Elliott.

"You drove me to it! Your brute indifference drove me to it!" she accused.

He waved this aside with cool disdain.

"The road was easy, I imagine."

The woman hurled the chair from her with a violence that threatened its destruction.

"It is not so! You are cowardly to say it! I trusted you until you openly shamed me—and even then I waited. I thought of Rose. I thought that you, too, would think of her and come back to us. But you did not. Yet still I waited. And then, one day, I gave up

waiting. I saw it was useless to expect of you a return to the loyalty you had pledged me. I felt absolved from loyalty to you. I felt free to do as you did—to seek diversion, to amuse myself. And I did it! I threw away my self-respect as you had thrown yours away, except—mark this, Sidney!—there was a limit I did not overstep. I stayed this side of it—not on your account—not on my account—but because, before it was too late, I thought of Rose. I was guilty up to that last thing, and there I stopped!"

She had approached him step by step, until now she stood with burning eyes commanding his. He returned her gaze, then silently crossed over to the window and looked down into the brilliant street with its antlike men and women crawling to and fro on every conceivable errand—even that of mercy, it might be, here and there.

Presently she followed him. As it had come, so her anger had gone, spent in a gust of words. Her voice was small and tired when she spoke again.

"I want you to believe what I have told you," she said, "because of Rose. I want you to believe it for her sake. I am bad, but I have not utterly forfeited my mother's right. If—if Rose should come to me, I could hold her in my arms not wholly guilty. I"—she faltered, close to tears—"I could go back. Sidney—whether or no—whether she comes to me or to you—for her sake I am going back!"

She sank into a chair, and was very still. Elliott stared unseeingly down into the street. He could not go back. He had passed the pale. But, as it happened, there was no social necessity for his going back. He was not disqualified by his transgressions from intercourse with the good and great. His stained immortal soul was clothed in a man's guise, and he could carry it without offense into the company of the elect of earth. Were his sins printed in scarlet on his shirt, did he but keep his coat on, he would be received.

But with this woman who had been his wife it was different. Her soul lacked the required fleshly covering. It

was unfortunate in its attire—the very beauty of the vesture invited attack. It need not be proved that Grace Elliott had sinned; it need be only whispered, and she was damned! Could she go back? Would it be believed that she had not overstepped the line? Had not he himself done all that he could to make it seem so? Of a sudden he faced around from the window and said to her:

"I believe you, Grace, though until now I disbelieved."

There was a gleam of gratitude in the glance that she gave him.

"You had reason," she acknowledged, and added very low: "I—I regret it."

He turned his hat thoughtfully in his hand. He had not laid it aside on coming in; he had wished her to understand that his minutes were counted.

"Perhaps," he said slowly, "I should have tried harder to see your side of the shield. Perhaps—but, what's the use? The thing is done and settled. It is out of our hands. You've got your freedom, which is what you wanted, and I've got mine. If it wasn't for Rose—".

"Rose! Ah, yes—Rose!"

The name lingered on the woman's lips like a prayer.

"I fought you for the child," pursued Elliott, in the same dead way. "It was not because I wished you harm; I wanted Rose. I thought she would go with the decree. I wanted her—Rose—the one thing our married life has brought us that is worth the price."

"The one thing that neither of us has valued rightly until now," murmured the other.

"Yes—that neither of us has been worthy of. *I can't go back the road I've come. I wish to God I could!* But for Rose—for her sake, whether with you or with me—I will not go farther on that road."

He stood irresolutely a moment longer, as if not quite satisfied with the completeness of this conclusion; then, bowing formally, he moved away. Grace Elliott sprang up with a cry.

"To-morrow! To-morrow! Is there nothing we can do? Sidney!"

She ran and barred his course to the door, her eyes lustrous with a strange, new light, and all her body quivering with an intensity of pleading.

"Sidney!" she cried again, and threw out her hands in a gesture of supreme entreaty.

Elliott looked at her in dull amazement. He did not understand. He did not see the self-abnegation of that appealing attitude—the trampled pride, the conquered will, the unconditional surrender that the wife was making to the mother. He saw only that they were the helpless victims of their own folly, and must abide the consequences.

"No," he said heavily, "there is nothing we can do, Grace—nothing now. It is too late!"

Her arms dropped, she moved aside, and he went out.

Judge Samuel Cabot sat at his desk in chambers with the Elliots before him, the woman at his right, the man at his left. Behind him was a door, on the other side of which little Rose Elliott waited in the care of her governess and a court official. Her mother and her father knew that she was there, and their eyes, which avoided each other's, were strained with a common anxiety on that door.

The judge was an old man. The scrolls of many lives had been unrolled for him to read, and he had seen sorrows of his own. From these sources he had drawn wisdom. He looked now at this man and woman, and said:

"The conviction has grown in me that the fifth commandment lacks balance and is incomplete. Parents should have been enjoined to honor their children, that they might receive honor from them in return. I know, for I have had children, and have suffered for my sins against them."

Sidney Elliott made a movement of impatience. He was not used to being lectured; his millions had bought him immunity from the unpleasantnesses to which the simple citizen is subject. But a glance at Judge Cabot's face warned him to silence. His money could not argue for him here. He was stripped

of all factitious aids—he stood spiritually naked before this little, stooped, and frail old man.

Grace Elliott made no sign; she sat stonily watching the door. The judge went on in his calm, measured tones:

"Before I have your child brought in to make her choice, I must command for her the consideration due the difficult position in which you have placed her. There is to be no outcry from you, no attempt to sway her to either side. Neither one of you is to speak to her. You are to sit there in silence, and allow her to choose dispassionately between you. She must be absolutely unbiased save by her own perceptions."

An inarticulate sound broke from the woman.

"It is hard, madam," said Judge Cabot unemotionally, "but you have yourself to thank."

"Bring in the child! Have done with it!" called out the man hoarsely.

"I have something to say to you first—to you both," was the rejoinder. "For the moment, this little girl's future is in my charge. I am deeply concerned about it. Frankly, I am reluctant to commit it to your keeping. You have failed to qualify. If it were a possible proceeding, I would exact a surety from you—the one that is chosen—guaranteeing to me that this pure young life would be held in sacred trust. But money does not meet a case like this; perhaps there is something else you could offer that I have not taken into account?"

Waiting courteously, the judge looked from one to the other for an answer; but it did not come, and their eyes dropped under his. With the shadow of a smile on his thin, white lips, he continued:

"This child—little Rose—is worse than orphaned. Her parents are alive, yet refuse to make a home for her. They have placed their quarrels above her happiness, above her love for them, above her trust in them. They have deserted her in the days of her greatest need. They have left her to the care of strangers, to the custody of courts. They have made the very name they

gave her a byword up and down the land. How can she honor a father and a mother who have so signally failed to honor her? How can she choose between them? What is there to choose?"

Grace Elliott shrank down in her chair and bowed her head in her hands. But Sidney Elliott, his face suffused with angry blood, stood up.

"Sir! Judge Cabot!" he said thickly. "You transcend your prerogatives! I call upon you to finish this business. Let my daughter come out to me!"

The judge quietly turned to the mother.

"Madam, are you ready to see your daughter?"

The woman lifted her head and looked over at her former husband, standing with drawn brows, empurpled and forbidding.

"No! Oh, no!" she cried out piteously. "I would rather she were dead than see us now!"

Judge Cabot turned to the man. He said nothing to him—merely waited.

"She is right," spoke up Elliott at last.

But he did not sit down; he stepped over to the desk, and, fronting the impulsive figure seated there, said with labored deliberation:

"I came to you last night, sir, and told you that rather than subject my daughter to this inhuman test that you have arranged, I would forego my claim to her. But you refused me, and I went away. I tell you now, sir, that she shall not be subjected to it; in the teeth of all your courts and all your laws, I say that she shall not! I renounce her! I give her to her mother—freely. I do it for the child's sake, for what I consider her best interests. And"—he paused to give the words force—"I do it for her mother's sake! Now, if you can find a law to prevent me from doing this, try it on—I shall fight it to the last extremity!"

He swung around abruptly, and, snatching up his hat, would have left the room; but Judge Cabot checked him.

"As you have stated the case, Mr.

Elliott," he said mildly, "it would seem to pass beyond my jurisdiction. But I must tell you that Mrs. Elliott made me, before you did, a like proposal. I took it under advisement. Then, when you came, the matter resumed its first complexion. Between two renouncements, it must still be left to the child; or, if you are both obstinate in your stand, a guardian, *in loco parentis*, must be considered."

Elliott looked at Grace. In her eyes was the strange light that he had seen there once before, though it was softer now, and dimmed with unshed tears. He addressed himself to the judge.

"Why did you not tell me this last night?" he demanded.

"I preferred to wait," was the unruffled response.

"Then why didn't you make the situation clear to us at the outset this morning? We did not come here to be harangued!" protested Elliott hotly.

Judge Cabot picked up a pencil from the desk, and carefully balanced it on his finger tip before replying. The least breath would disturb the pencil's delicate adjustment. To the two watching him, the act, in some way, did not seem incongruous with the proceedings; it seemed to be a part of them.

"I am soon to retire from the bench," observed the judge, intent upon his pencil. "It is time. I am getting to be a garrulous old man. I depart from the strict letter of the law. I say things that are not according to rule. When young people bring their difficulties before me, I grope around in my mind for some ultimate way out of them better than that to be found in the books. I try to see if they can't go back to the beginning of their troubles and start afresh, avoiding, in the light of experience, the pitfalls that entrapped them. It takes courage to go back and start over again, but it pays—it pays! I did it once, and it paid me."

The judge did not take his eyes from the pencil. It was wavering, ready to fall; but, with a slight turn of his wrist,

the balance was restored. His remarks meeting with no comment, the judge proceeded:

"The question before us now is: Will one of you withdraw in favor of the other, or shall the child decide? Either way is cruel and unfair to this little girl who loves you both—this little girl whose life is all to come, and who needs the guiding hands of both father and mother to help her over the rough spots in the road and point out the snares set for youth and innocence. She loves you both and she needs you both—little Rose!"

Again the judge paused, and again he was met with silence. He lifted the pencil from his finger, and laid it down, though he still kept his eyes lowered to it.

"My position," he said very gently, "imposes on me unpleasant duties in the administration of the law that I cannot escape. But it also confers on me a privilege in compensation—I can reunite ties that I have sundered. I have done it here in this room—and God's blessing has gone with it!"

The old man drew to him the loose papers on his desk, and busied himself arranging them in little separate piles. The task seemed to call for his closest attention. While he was thus engaged, Elliott slowly got up from his chair. He moved hesitatingly across the space that intervened between himself and the mother of his child. But she did not wait for him. She sprang up and met him with outstretched hands before he had covered half the distance. He understood now the transfiguring light that made her eyes like stars.

Judge Cabot, suddenly finding his papers in perfect array, laboriously rose to his feet. His years were making him feel their weight.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "I had quite forgotten Rose. I will send her in."

He went softly out through the door just back of him—little, old, and stooped.



XI.—THE ONLY WAY

Qualities I have,
Would little stead me, otherwise employed,
Yet prove of rarest merit only here.
Every one knows for what his excellence
Will serve, but no one ever will consider
For what his worse defect might serve.

—*Pippa Passes.*

SHE was the prettiest and the most dainty young creature that Pippa had ever seen, a being who might have been made of gossamer stuff—of spun moonbeams and dream fiber.

And the more Mrs. Carpenter looked at her, the more dissatisfied she became with that first adjective that had leaped impulsively to her mind. No, the girl was not "pretty"; she was something better. Her features were irregular, her hair rather colorless, her figure too slender, her eyes a nondescript gray green, her complexion pale to excess. Yet she was exquisite. With that subtle and delicate young grace, she might have been really ugly, and yet charming. As it was, it cast a glamour over her whole person, enchanting her hair to a luster that it did not actually possess, lighting her eyes, laying soft spells of wistful sweetness about her little pale mouth.

"What a fairy child!" thought Pippa, charmed. "She is grown up—twenty, I should say—and yet she has the dew upon her petals still. What a dear, dreamy smile! And she has little-girl eyes!"

8

As they were both living at the same small family hotel, Pippa found it easy to introduce herself. It was the sort of hotel where one can get a suite or a hall bedroom, just as one likes. Philippa Carpenter had the suite, and the girl the hall bedroom. She had a voice as charming as her appearance, Philippa found, and was prettily grateful to the older woman for speaking to her. She was, she admitted simply, awfully lonely.

That Sunday evening saw them deep in talk—understanding talk that went far below the surface of things. Among other confidences, the girl divulged that her name was Phyllis Grant, and that she was on the stage.

"The stage!" echoed Pippa, amazed.

The very idea was preposterous. This fragile child, with the wistful little mouth, and the glamour of fairyland still about her, on the stage! Mrs. Carpenter felt vaguely indignant. How had it happened that she had ever been permitted to select so unsuitable a calling? And how had she preserved her dewlike freshness in surroundings that must be more or less sordid and meretricious?

"How long have you been on the stage?" she asked the girl.

She was startled further by the answer: "Two years."

"Two years! And you aren't tired of it yet?"

"I couldn't be tired of it—ever!" The "little-girl eyes" were like stars. "Why, Mrs. Carpenter, it's wonderful! More wonderful than anything I ever dreamed! And that's saying a good deal, too, for I've dreamed some pretty wonderful things sometimes!" She laughed, a child's laugh, clear and sweet.

"Tell me," said Mrs. Carpenter, "what it is that you find—wonderful."

Phyllis leaned forward, her thin hands clasped on her knee, her eyes wide and abstracted.

"Why—everything; just everything!" she returned slowly, a little frown creasing her forehead as she tried to put the thing into words. "I—I don't know how it has been with you. Maybe you haven't dreamed a lot; maybe you haven't had to, I mean?" Her eyes met Pippa's eagerly. "Maybe you've lived all the lovely things, and didn't need to dream them?"

Pippa did not answer, for the memory of her own lost dreams choked her. The girl went on:

"Everything with me has just been pretending. Do you remember 'Sara Crewe'? Well, my childhood was a little bit like that—hard work, and ugly things to look at, and ugly clothes to wear. There was a brown calico thing—" She shuddered. "But never mind about that! Even the food was ugly. There was enough of it, you understand, but it was all *ugly*, and uninteresting—turnips, and boiled beef, and pork and beans, eaten on awful dishes that you *couldn't* break—I know, because I hated them so that sometimes I tried. Do you understand?"

Philippa nodded without speaking. She was afraid to say anything. Confidences are as shy as birds, and can be frightened back into their cages by an inopportune word.

"I used to want—oh, how I used to want pretty things!" said Phyllis. "I

used to get up in the middle of the night, and pray, 'Please God, make me pretty, and let me wear pretty clothes, and eat pretty food!' I know 'pretty' is a silly word to use about things to eat, but I meant something that wasn't just food, but was dainty and pleasant, too. One day I went to a lady's house to carry home some sewing my stepmother had been doing for her, and she saw me in the dining room where she and her daughter were lunching. On the table was a big silver bowl of pale green salad, and another bowl, made of bright glass, full of ripe, red strawberries. And there was a big glass pitcher. I had never seen anything so pretty as that table in all my life; I hadn't known that just *food* could be so lovely!" Phyllis laughed with a sort of break in her laughter. "You see, I was hungry—but hungry for beauty! When I went on the stage, it was because of the beauty it brought into my life."

"Beauty! The theater?"

"Yes—oh, yes! There people can pretend beautiful things anyway. They can wear lovely clothes, and have nice, dainty things about them for a few hours a day, even if it is all nothing but a play. Can't you see?"

"I can see that you are a very wonderful little person," said Pippa gently. "Won't you go on?"

Phyllis smiled at her in vague bewilderment; then continued, pouring out her heart:

"Why, I was an 'extra girl' once in a production with an Oriental setting. I nearly went out of my mind every night with the pleasure and excitement of it. It didn't matter to me a bit that it was ugly behind the scenes; so it was ugly in the kitchen at home! And rehearsing all day and being scolded by the stage manager wasn't any worse than hanging out clothes in the sun, and being scolded by my stepmother! When I had on my Oriental costume, and got on the stage, with a big green-and-gilt god on one side, and a lot of pink paper cherry blossoms and some girls with funny stringed instruments on the other; with all those queer lights, and

the thumpy, Eastern music—well, it was like heaven, that's all! Sometimes I'd hardly wake up till the performance was over. Then I'd go out and buy pretty things to eat—fruit, and little rolls, and milk, and things like that. The first thing I bought for my furnished room was a glass pitcher!"

Pippa looked at her wonderingly and tenderly. What a rare and lovely nature that it could idealize so triumphantly! But what tragic roads might stretch before it!

"And in this fairy-tale life of yours," she said, very gently, "there is no fairy prince?"

The color poured into Phyllis Grant's face.

"Why did you—how did you know?" she asked breathlessly, her eyes widening and darkening. "Yes! There is a fairy prince now—a real, real fairy prince!"

She was so full of this new wonder, which had evidently so recently come to her, that she told her love story willingly enough. It appeared that the fairy prince was Basil Coverley, the matinée idol, famed for his good looks rather than for his good acting, but an undoubtedly popular Broadway star.

Pippa knew of him, and had a shrewd notion that he was very far from being the fairy prince of little Phyllis Grant's dreams. A rather selfish, material, young-old man, whose potentialities for spiritual or mental development had been smothered for all time by prosperity and adulation—this was the Basil Coverley that she had heard described by men and women who knew him. Yet Phyllis thought him a fairy prince!

The child went on to describe him as he appeared to her. He was, it appeared, handsome, brilliant, chivalrous, charming; the kindest, the best, the most gallant of men, a sort of demigod who had stooped from his exalted place to—wasn't it wonderful?—actually to fall in love with a poor little actress who spoke just two lines in his new play! Sometimes he took her out to luncheon after rehearsal, she told Pippa; and he sent her violets, and he said that one of these days they'd

be married, and she'd have real parts to play! Only, he didn't want to announce it just yet, because a married star scared the managers, and he had booked under a new man and didn't want to get him down on him the very first season.

"But what does that part of it matter anyway?" Phyllis wound up happily. "We don't have to make any announcement; we know we are engaged! And, later, the company is going on the road for three months. Think of it! I'll be with him lots and lots of the time, traveling in the same train, and sometimes dining with him! Oh, isn't it heavenly to—to have a fairy prince, Mrs. Carpenter?" And she colored again, and laughed shyly.

Pippa was cordial and sympathetic, but her instinct told her that all was not well. These plausible reasons for not announcing the engagement sounded more like the Basil Coverley of report than like Phyllis' *preux chevalier*. This, and what she had heard of the man, and her knowledge of the free-and-easy code of "the road" among a certain class of actors—all combined to make the older woman uneasy. She had a strong desire to see Coverley for herself. She was sure that, if she did, she would know whether or not he was worthy to be trusted with so lovely a thing as Phyllis Grant.

"I wonder," she said slowly, "if you would not like to have me meet your fiancé?"

Phyllis flushed with pleasure.

"Oh, Mrs. Carpenter, what a dear you are, to take so much interest!" she exclaimed. "Of course I'll arrange it, and he—Basil"—she stammered a little over the name—"will be delighted, I know."

She was as elated as a child, and charmingly self-important. That it should be given to her humble self to bring about a meeting between this wonderful and delightful Mrs. Carpenter and the celebrated Basil Coverley!

Next day she tapped on Pippa's door, in high spirits.

"I fixed it!" she announced gayly.

"Basil wants us both to lunch with him at the Nestor to-morrow. You will be able to come, won't you?"

There was a casual informality about Coverley's invitation that displeased Philippa, for, like a great many unconventional people, she liked the little social niceties to be strictly preserved; but she was interested only in seeing and judging the man, so she accepted.

When Phyllis had gone, she sat down to do a little serious thinking. As a result of this meditation, she got up with a sigh and a slight grimace, and went to look over her hats.

When Phyllis Grant stopped for her next day, she found an entirely new person awaiting her.

"Oh, how—how wonderful you are!" she breathed, in open-eyed admiration.

Mrs. Carpenter was always beautifully gowned and daintily groomed, but to-day she was in some obscure way more exquisite, in all ways more perfect. Phyllis Grant had never seen any one so charming to look upon. There are few women who do not know on occasion how to present themselves at the greatest advantage; and Pippa Carpenter knew more about it than most women!

Her wonderful deep-red hair was dressed with that miraculous touch that suggests simplicity, but is almost impossible to copy. Her hat and gown carried the tone of her purple-gray eyes to deeper shades of amethyst. She was, in fine, looking her very best.

"Hello, there! I thought you were never coming!"

The cheerful hail came from ten feet down the Nestor corridor. Mrs. Carpenter, as she turned with Phyllis, could not help a mental comment to the effect that men did not as a rule greet their feminine guests from such a distance in public places.

A very blond, clean-featured man was smilingly holding out his hand.

"So this is the lovely lady at last!" he said, with startling ease.

Coverley was distinctly good looking—not only in the "beauty actor" style, either. He had muscle, inches, and a chin, and his skin looked well from the

front with very little make-up. His hair was so fair that one did not see the threads of gray that would have proclaimed him a good deal older than was admitted by his press agent. His eyes were big and blue; sundry of his enemies had been known to say that he was the only male alive who cultivated "the baby stare"!

Pippa eliminated with difficulty the annoyance that swept her at his confident impertinence, and said graciously enough, "What a very nice way to put it!"

They went in to the orange room, and Phyllis, at whom Coverley had barely glanced and smiled, heard Mrs. Carpenter saying in her delicious and rather plaintive voice: "You know there is a sort of catchword about town; I've forgotten the actual form of it, but it's to the effect that 'if Basil Coverley is not the one best authority on women's clothes, looks, and behavior, it is merely because he's too busy attending to his profession!' Are those heavenly looking tall glasses clam cocktails?"

Coverley laughed at every other word she said. Pippa was not being witty to-day; she was clever enough not to be, before him. Therefore she appraised each burst of laughter at its value; weighed and judged him by this, and by a certain shifting smile that she interpreted in the light of past experience. The man was no better and probably no worse than she had expected him to be. He was frankly animal, frankly unintellectual, frankly ordinary. Nothing but Phyllis Grant's exquisite idealism could have transformed him into the semblance of a fairy prince. Pippa thanked Heaven that she was in time. The child should be saved from the influence of such a man at any cost.

And she was in time. She knew very well, within ten minutes of their meeting, that she could do what she liked with Basil Coverley. This fact in itself aroused a fiercer sense of resentment and antagonism on the girl's account. And as her anger rose, her eyes grew brighter and more dangerous as she looked at him.

But poor little Phyllis did not under-

stand the game! She was young and sensitive; she adored Basil, and looked up to Mrs. Carpenter as the most charming woman she had ever met. And what was happening before her? Both her idols were tottering upon their pedestals, changing from moment to moment into persons as foreign to her understanding as beings from another planet. Her wide, little-girl eyes turned from one face to the other in a vaguely pained bewilderment.

Phyllis had seen women flirt before, but it had been ordinary flirting, either brazen or silly. She had never seen a clever and fascinating and high-bred woman make herself deliberately charming in order to attract a man.

Basil Coverley's face was flushed, and Phyllis thought that his eyes looked oddly flushed too, as if he had been drinking, though she knew that he had not. She could not understand it at all. She only knew that he had forgotten her as completely as if she did not exist.

The luncheon—exceedingly good, though a shade too elaborate and ample—ended at last. The three stood on the steps of the hotel while the carriage man called up a taxicab.

"Are you coming back with me?" asked Pippa of Phyllis.

The girl shook her head, without looking at the older woman.

"No," she said dully. "I—I've some errands to attend to. Good-by!"

She turned and left them abruptly, walking quickly down the street as if she were hastening away from something. Coverley laughed patronizingly.

"Nice little girl!" he remarked, in a condescending tone. "Would you like a turn in the park?"

Pippa could have struck him, in her present mood, but instead she said languidly:

"Some other day."

"To-morrow?" he demanded eagerly.

She let her eyes meet his, and smiled as women can smile when they have an object.

"If you like," she agreed sweetly.

In one week Pippa Carpenter did it all. She annexed Basil Coverley as ut-

terly as if she had bought and paid for him in a market. He cut rehearsals, bungled his part, quarreled with his manager, ruined himself on flowers and old editions—did every insane and foolish thing that he could do to prove that, as he himself put it, he was "off his head about her"! In the first white heat of his emotions, he was easily induced to have Phyllis Grant dropped from his company as incompetent.

She came to Pippa's room, very white indeed, and told her about it.

"Of course it's your doing," she said in a matter-of-fact manner, looking straight at the older woman. "I can't see how you could have *borne* to—do it."

Philippa knew well that the last sentence referred to something more than the loss of the position.

"Naturally," the girl went on, "my engagement to Mr. Coverley is broken, also. You are—you are a very wicked woman. I thought any one as beautiful as you must be high and good; but you are wicked."

Then she went quietly out of the room, and Pippa Carpenter broke down and cried as if her heart would break.

After a time, she went to her desk and wrote a very brief note to Basil Coverley. She was through with him. He had served his purpose, and she dismissed him as curtly and with as little compunction as she would have dismissed a messenger boy after he had finished his errand.

Phyllis was safe; she and Coverley would never come together again. Philippa found comfort in this thought. And yet—it was long before she could think of the little-girl eyes without a stabbing sense of pain. The child had adored her in the whole-hearted, innocent way in which a young girl can adore an older woman, and it had meant much to Pippa to have a girl's friendship. And she had forfeited it for all time.

"It was the only way," she whispered to her own heart. "She would never have believed that he was unworthy if she had not *seen*! But to save her, I had to—lose her!"

Aladdin's Window

By

Halbro Barfley



NT was nearing the rainy season in the island, and Caldwell had sent troops along the coastal towns to give explicit instructions as to proper food and careful water drinking. Incidentally, they had taken a miserable cornet with them and were to play "The Star-spangled Banner" three times a day, to teach the gugus to take off their hats, if they had any, as a sign of patriotic reverence. One of the Manila Powers had made the suggestion.

Peace had reigned at the commandancia for the last few months. The troops had been getting a beefy, satisfied air to which Caldwell objected; and young Harvey, first lieutenant, had wished for a little activity. Caldwell longed for young Harvey now.

Seated on the commandancia veranda, he and Doc Venner, the army surgeon, were discussing the situation as calmly as it was possible for them to do, each having small respect for the other's opinion. It was not a pleasant tangle that this newly rising civilization and hard-dying savagery had woven. It was not an ordinary tangle. And the weaver of the pattern had been taken from the loom at the moment when he was most needed.

Caldwell took a scroll out of a messenger's brown hand.

"Here's a request from the sultan for you to call on the Princess Topal," he said, after reading. "I presume they

are getting ready for the fiesta now. Go on down, Venner—give her bread-and-sugar pills and make those harem nurses understand that when the baby does come, he must *not* be handled, like a new set of ankle bracelets. We can do that much, anyhow."

"I'll go in a few minutes." The army surgeon pushed the matter aside indifferently. "Just now, Caldy, we've got to talk this thing over. You don't seem to realize—"

"I'll tell you what this trouble is in two brief words," Caldwell interrupted. "It's a case of 'Aladdin's window'!"

"And that is?" Doc Venner prayed for patience; the heat of the day had irritated him, and he did not care to waste time in moralizing over the situation.

"You've heard the legend, haven't you? When Aladdin built a palace for his bride, the Princess of Cathay, he left one window for his father-in-law to finish, but the sultan found that he couldn't gather together enough treasure in all the world to do it. So the phrase, 'to finish Aladdin's window' has come to mean the trying to carry through some work left unfinished by a great man. There you are—isn't the death of José Carmine a case of Aladdin's window? How can we, a military organization, carry on his work for the Moro blind? That work must be carried on—Carmine put his very soul into that institute of his—and yet we've no

time and no money, and no sympathy from the sultan."

"Your phrase hits off the case pretty well," the doctor admitted ungraciously. "But it doesn't help us in the matter of telling the Sultan Rigal Davao that we can't pay him for the land and the food he has been furnishing to the Carmine Institute for the Blind. Just who was Carmine, anyway, Caldy, and why did he pick out an institute for the blind and crippled, instead of endowing a *passé-ballet-dancers' home* or leaving his money to the church?"

"It was a rather unusual thing for a gugu-hating Spaniard to do. José Carmine was a quaint little Spaniard, of noble descent, whose entire life was spent in doing good every way he could turn. I believe there was a love affair that terminated tragically when he was a younger man. After trying various reforms for the Christianized natives, Carmine came down into the Moro country. Here he found that the government took good care of outlaws by shooting them off, and made men out of fairly tractable Mohammedans. He decided that we ferreted out the lepers and worked rather decently during cholera and fever times. But there were two conditions in Moro affairs that called him to spend his life and money among them—this was after years of working in Leyte, and Luzon, and Samar. One condition—that of the women—seemed to him hopeless and beyond his ability, and he decided to let time take care of it; he hoped that American women might bring a new viewpoint into the country, or that perhaps his other charity might prove an opening wedge. But the condition of the blind or crippled man in Mindanao struck him with horror. A blind woman babe is left to die at birth; but a man child is brought up in slavery or degradation, his affliction being considered a mark that Allah has sent him into the world to be treated as an outcast, a worthless leech, tolerated only because he is in a man's body and all men may some time enter into heaven, even if it be one of the lower circles.

"After much red tape and many con-

ferences with the blessed Powers, José Carmine built the long, rambling house, with its outlying huts, off there in the valley. And to his protégé and life-long friend, 'Nevada' Hugo, he gave full charge. Perhaps the real reason why he cared so much to see Moro babies with blinking, sightless eyes playing happily in the gardens, or to watch boys learning broom making or the women weaving, while the old people sat in unpersecuted contentment—perhaps the reason for this was that he always held a thin, nervous hand over his soft, brown eyes while talking; and if you looked sharply, you would have seen the vague, almost indistinguishable film that covered the pupils. There were only a few of us, Venner, who knew of the film, and of the days that Señor Carmine spent in a dark room, or of the verdict of the Paris specialist who told him gently that if he lived to be an old man—say sixty—he would not need to stay in a dark room, since all the world would answer as its substitute.

"You know the rest, Venner—how the little gentleman died, just as you came back from your furlough. Dying, he asked to be taken to Madrid to be buried with his father and mother, and Hugo took the body back. The will left everything to the institute, vesting Hugo with absolute authority, even to the admitting of inmates and the hiring of employees. Carmine so loved and trusted him—queer, how every good man makes some one fatal mistake in judging character! You know of Hugo's long absence; you know, too, that the land bought from the sultan for the institute has not been paid for, and that the sultan has been giving food and labor for the inmates, merely waiting Hugo's return for a settlement.

"Now this letter arrives from Hugo, announcing that the money Carmine left in Spanish investments for the institute has been lost—he will send a detailed account later on—stating that he is extremely sorry that the lack of personal means prevents his carrying on so noble a work, but trusts that the government will take up the cause, and

if he can ever be of any help, and so forth! *Chungo* [blackguard] I haven't a doubt that he has confiscated the money to travel with at leisure. The letter says that he is going away shortly to recover his health, the islands having impaired it. Now, then—the debt to the sultan. Ye gods, Venner, you know what the Powers would say if asked to pay, the endless arguing and delay it would take to convince 'em! And yet to turn out to the cruel mercies of the natives the old, helpless people who have grown used to kindness, the young people who are being taught trades, the children who are learning the big truths of civilization, the babies—it's unthinkable! But who will finish Aladdin's window?"

They were silent. Each thought of the loads under which the post already staggered—the tracing of treason and outlaws, the building of sanitary houses, the suppressing of cholera, the instituting of a school system. The care of José Carmine's blind would be the last straw. And yet—Carmine's soul seemed to stand accusingly before them as if to ask: "What will you do with my people?" The sightless eyes of the blind seemed to stare at them with agonized questioning.

The army surgeon broke the silence.

"Caldwell, we're so damned unlike that it's fair betting we both ought to tell the sultan. What one wouldn't say or promise, the other would. Every man is half knave and half hero—and the double combination ought to be good."

Caldwell yelled for a muchacho to saddle the ponies.

"That's the best thing you've said in a long time, Venner. You needn't speak now for two days."

It was just a year since the young Sultan Davao had married the Princess Topal. Although it had been as true a love match as the comandancia had ever witnessed, it had been a diplomatic union as well; and the tribes of both bride and groom—the Lanao Moros and the Cotabato Moros—were praying for a crown prince. They were extremely

superstitious about the birth of this first child; both the sultan and his wife were strong allies of the American government, and the child was to be a sign of Allah's pleasure or displeasure at their marriage, and at their allegiance to the Americanos. If it should be a girl, they would regard that allegiance as a calamity, a proof that the strength of their people was declining under Americano rule. The birth of the child was awaited almost as eagerly at the comandancia as at the palace.

Caldwell and Venner found the young sultan sitting beside Topal's couch, talking to her with a tenderness unusual in a Moro man. He rose to welcome the Americanos with a free sweep of his strong, young hands, and then pointed to Topal affectionately.

"My princess is so well!" he said proudly. "She has been telling me her thoughts—pretty, jeweled thoughts that amuse me. See, Topal, Inspector Caldwell and the English doctor who makes our people strong and well—can you not say some word of greeting?"

There was a mischievous flash in the young girl's eyes as she raised them to the white men. She pushed back her long, dark braids of hair with her small, pointed hands, and beckoned one of her women to fan her.

"Ah, you have come to tell us of the blind colony," she bantered; "to tell us that the inmates wish—what is it you say?—American mince pie with each *chow* [meal], as well as the rice and fish! Is that it? Or do they wish for a sewing machine such as the government gave me, and on which the tiny clothes have been made—or a phonograph? Say what—and my lord will grant it."

Caldwell stammered some nonsense in reply. The doctor sat down beside her and began telling her of a new flower that he had found on the Capoy trail, a combination of rose and lily with a fragrance more wonderful than either.

Caldwell motioned to the sultan that he wished to speak with him alone. Satisfied that his princess was in safe hands, the sultan led Caldwell into his

own apartments. Five minutes later, after telling Topal that he would gather a spray of the flowers in the cool of the afternoon and send them to her, the doctor slid cautiously into their animated discussion on the foolishness of filing and blacking perfectly good white teeth.

"Ah, the English doctor!" said the sultan, with renewed interest. "And my Topal—she is well?"

"Horribly so—can't even give her a sugar pill." Doc Venner glanced at Caldwell to see if the subject had been broached.

The Sultan Davao threw back his slender, well-modeled head to laugh. He liked both Americanos—the army surgeon for his blunt, brisk manner of telling either unpleasant truths or joyous surprises, and Caldwell, senior inspector, for his gentle, kindly manner of making one feel at peace with all the world—one's self included.

"And now?" questioned the sultan, impatient to be back with his wife, "and now—for what have you wished to see me? More talk of the blind institute and the dead Spaniard? Bah, I like not the idea—weaklings, Allah's discard—bad business!"

A frown crossed his face.

"It is of the institute," said Caldwell, taking the initiative. "How have you divined it? A seventh son—surely. Sultan Davao, you are a good Americano subject, are you not?—as good and as loyal as your father before you?"

They were speaking English now, avoiding the Arabic with its "thou" and "thee."

"Of what crime can you accuse me that you doubt?" There was a hurt look in the flashing, black eyes.

"Of no crime. Only, if you are a true and loyal subject, you will bear the losses and calamities of your nation?"

"Is it pearl pirates?" asked the sultan, a gleam of the old fighting spirit in his face. "My men are well trained, better with the creese than your men with their tut-tuts [rifles]. Is it to rush a *cota* [fort]?"

"It is not pearl pirates, and there

is no enemy's fort to be taken." The army surgeon took up the burden. "It is a personal loss, Sultan Davao—it is the money for the Carmine Institute—the land you sold them, the food and labor you have supplied since Nevada Hugo's absence. Hugo is a bad man; he has swindled you, has cheated the blind, has betrayed José Carmine's trust. He has written us from Spain, claiming that the money for the institute has been lost! We can do nothing; he is too far away. Señor Carmine left everything in his hands, even the investing of funds, there were no directors to make an examination semi-annually. You see, we are quite at your mercy. We hope—we—"

"The blind!" The snarl in the sultan's voice was worse than either man had feared. "What are the blind but Allah's discard?"

"The government," continued the doctor evenly, "has no funds at hand at present to make good your loss." He smiled faintly as he thought of the endless pink teas and charity bazaars that the majors' wives would give to raise the money. "Señor Carmine's death is one of those things that none of us can explain. But there is no money at present, Sultan Davao—and you must be generous enough to give us time in which we can make some plan or arrangement to—"

"The blind!" the sultan repeated, with a significant gesture. "You know what I think of the blind and the crippled. They have women in that valley place, women who have no right to be living." His hand was shaking with anger. "Am I a fool that I should be swindled, a Moro sultan swindled by your powerful country?" The sneer in his voice made them wince. "Am I a poor Mohammedan, to deny the teachings of my faith? No!" He rose and walked toward the army surgeon with long, swinging steps. "I will not listen to such robbery. I will not harbor such bringers of ill luck as those who sleep, and eat, and grow fat on strong men's labor and food. The institute is mine—do you hear? I have the papers in your English saying so,

stating the loan; I have them in Spanish and in Arabic, too. It is mine—and the people in it are mine. Do you know what I will do? I will take every crippled man and blind man, and brand them as my slaves, pigs who have swallowed in idleness, covering their eyes with a veil. And the women and children? I will have them thrown into the—”

“The Princess Topal wishes you,” said a brown slave softly.

The army surgeon had done his share. It was Caldwell who saw the loophole.

“The sultan will be with her soon,” he told the slave presumptuously.

Then he faced the tall, sinewy young man, who folded his embroidered sarrong around his shoulders with a gesture of calm indifference as to what any one might say.

“Rigal Davao,” said Caldwell slowly, “within a very few days, or possibly hours, there will be a little child, a man babe, born in the palace. All the people in the barrio are waiting for him, all the people of the princess’ tribe are waiting. We white men on the hill are waiting, too. The fiesta will last a week—and money will be thrown to the poor, platters of rich food will be given to any one who asks, bracelets and nose rings and anklets to the harem. All the valley and all the mountain will rejoice at the coming of the man babe, who, in turn, will grow to be as strong and reliant a rajahmundah as you were; who will go to Manila and study English; who will come back to marry some dato’s daughter and take the responsibility of the province from your aging shoulders. Sire, such a happening is close, close at hand. Would you, therefore, on the very eve of so great an event—more joyous than your betrothal or your marriage—would you do violence to those for whom we ask mercy? Will you not stay your anger, turn it into joy for welcoming the man babe?”

The sultan had turned away from Caldwell toward the apartments of Topal. Could they have seen his face, they would have noticed that a gentler expression had come into it.

A long silence followed. Then, without turning toward them, the young sultan answered:

“If the child be a strong *man* babe, I will not molest or harm the blind, although they are as loathsome to me as poisonous serpents. Weakness is not in our language; it was in Manila they taught me that—and fear—and cowardice. But as a test of joy for my son—my son!”—he paused in the ecstasy of repeating the words—“I pledge you safety for your institute—until the government decides what way is best to pay the debt.”

“We thank you, Sultan Davao,” Caldwell said gravely.

“And I will stay in the palace,” added the army surgeon, “lest the princess wish me.”

Caldwell, guiding his horse slowly up the steep trail, looked back at the palace and the round mosque beside it.

“If it isn’t a man babe,” he said aloud drearily, “if it isn’t a man babe—Carmine, why did you leave an Aladdin’s window?”

Early the next morning, Caldwell was roused by music, the Moro chant of joy that is sung on rare occasions. Stepping out on the veranda, he was met by the sultan, who threw himself at his feet.

“Allah, be praised, the man babe is born! The English doctor is more wonderful than the cadi! I have seen my Topal, I have seen my man babe, my rajahmundah! Come, come into the valley with us, beloved brother! All the valley must rejoice—the blind, even the blind and the crippled may have *maurok* [chicken]. See, there is nothing I will not do! I have seen the beautiful, straight-limbed man babe! I have kissed him—as the father kisses his son but once. I have seen my princess—”

He had risen and was holding Caldwell’s shoulders in a tense grip. Behind him stood the cargadors with the imperial litter, their white, embroidered robes swaying in the light breeze. Back of these were slaves and harem favorites, according to custom. All were

chanting the monotonous song of joy, praising Allah, praising Maopay [good], an even older deity whom, in bursts of sudden loyalty, the natives worshiped when deeply grieved or pleased.

"And the man babe?" Caldwell struggled to keep from telling the sultan that a heavy load right at the base of his head had slipped away at the news, tried to make his joy consistent with his dignity. "And the man babe—we can see him?"

A slight cloud crossed the bright smile.

"The English doctor is all wise, all powerful." Caldwell knew that he had lost his place in the first rank, and thanked his stars that Venner had returned from his furlough in time. "The English doctor says it must be a full seven days and nights before I see my man babe—see when he is sleeping! But my Topal shall see him and hear him cry—and tell me—Oh, the rajahmundah. Allah be praised! Sing louder, louder, louder!"

He turned to his people with passionate fury, as if to key them up to the breaking point of emotion.

"And why?" asked Caldwell, before he thought.

But the sultan was urging him to have his pony saddled—or would he ride in the royal litter? Yes, yes, that was it. Bah, what were blind institutes to him, what was money? The man babe had come—and Topal had smiled—and the English doctor was all wise.

But Caldwell answered in monosyllables—and the heavy pressure at the back of his head returned as he waited, through the jolting, hilarious ride, to reach Doc Venner and grasp his hand and ask the truth. And when the army surgeon—his face gray with the worry of hours, with endless debating in his own soul as to how to tell the truth—met Caldwell and told—Caldwell staggered, and the cry of the harem women and the jangle of the G bells fell faint upon his ears.

The army surgeon thought it wiser to defer the truth-telling until Topal was stronger—and in her weakened, happy

state, the truth could be so easily dulled and twisted. It would be time enough after the great fiesta to tell the sultan what had happened. For the troops would be home by then, and they would be badly needed.

Caldwell asked again, to be sure that the sun of yesterday had not twisted his senses a trifle awry.

"I tell you the rajahmundah's blind," repeated Doc Venner roughly. "The eyes will never open—blind! God help Aladdin's window!"

The barrio had exhausted itself in rejoicing, in besieging the window of the little rajahmundah's nursery with entreaties to see him. In the mosque there had been a solemn ceremony of praise, and a dedication of the child to the sultanship.

Every morning to the comandancia came baskets of freshly picked fruit, or some quaint hammered-silver piece wrought by the sultan's expert workmen. Every evening Caldwell and the army surgeon, waiting patiently for the troops' return, would sit on either side of the sultan and force course after course of impossible food down their throats, listening to their host's joyful impatience for the time when the rajahmundah should be laid in his arms that he might see him close at hand and listen to his queer, tiny cries.

And every night, later, Caldwell, with a dogged stubbornness, would ask the army surgeon whether he was sure, oh, absolutely sure, that the little rajahmundah's eyes would not open. To which the army surgeon would answer, with a grim smile: "Never." Then there would be a pause, and Doc Venner would add:

"If the troops aren't here by the tenth day, the storm will have to burst. I can't keep the man away from his own child any longer. Think what it's been now—a week—and Topal is beginning to suspect. 'Whyfore does the man babe sleep so often and whyfore is he sleeping always when he is laid in my arms?' she has asked. Caldy, what's going to happen to the blind institute when the sultan learns the truth?"

"Happen?" Caldwell gave a peculiar little click of the teeth. "Why, *lantaca* [cannon] will be lined up around them and fired, and those who are so unfortunate as to survive will be marked with a *campilan* [two-handled sword] until Davao's wrath is appeased. Then the schoolhouses will be burned, and the people will be told not to obey us and drink river water and die like flies. They'll come up to the comandancia and take us, and probably——"

"I shouldn't have been such an ass as to ask and let ourselves conjure up nasty panoramas. But living down here with this secret, keeping it from even the harem nurses under the guise of making the man babe stronger than if women handled him—it's getting me, do you understand? Getting me. It was more to spare Topal, Caldy, than to wait until the troops came. You know what I mean."

Caldwell nodded. "But he loves her."

"But he does not know that his child is blind. Wait!"

On the morning of the tenth day, Caldwell and the army surgeon summoned the sultan to the mosque, asking that his chief pandita and a cadi from Topal's tribe be present. All the day before, they had kept an anxious lookout for the sight of dusty, brown figures marching up the trail, a strip of flag fluttering in front. But the tenth day came, and Caldwell, who had been playing the rôle of Sister Anne, left the lookout station to descend into the valley.

Topal was watching her baby as he slept. Venner dropped in casually to tell her that she must not try wakening him until they returned. He was to bring her his^{hus} and to see him—the English process of making him a strong, hardy, man warrior was ended.

Whereupon, Topal, looking at the army surgeon with her grave, serious eyes, eyes with a curious blue-gray tinge in them, said softly:

"You have tried so hard, English doctor—but I know."

"And you feel——" burst out Venner.

"I am a mother," Topal answered, with a new dignity.

The sultan, pacing impatiently up and down the outer room of the mosque, was telling in quick, native sentences what he was going to do for the rajahmundah. He would teach him to ride as no rajahmundah had ever ridden, he would teach him to shoot—with English rifles—and to load a cannon like a regular. He would teach him Arabic and native and English, and he would send him to Manila to be given Latin and French, and a new grasp on Old World truth. He would dress him American fashion, he would have him drill with the American flag, he would give him books to read—American and English—such as his father had so wisely given him. And as for Topal—the beautiful bride mother—he would dress her in the richest of fabrics, he would give her jewels and rare feather ornaments. She should drink the choicest wines and be driven through the flower-covered mountain slopes that she loved so well. The English doctor should have money with which to build his soldier hospital and the senior inspector should be presented with a bag of pesos. He could buy books for the school, or flags, or what not—the pesos should be his. And as for the Carmine Institute—let them live. Who, in the throes of so great a joy, could possibly stop to consider such menaces? Let them live—it was a whim of the white men to want them unmolested. True, he had lost money—but he had gained his rajahmundah, his beautiful man babe, his successor to the province!

His face glowed with happiness as he paced back and forth, refusing to listen to interruptions. Happiness was his—and the rajahmundah—and Topal. And he was an Americano—glorious, brave Americano—and he would stand the loss of money and land because of the rajahmundah whom Allah had sent as a sign of His pleasure. He was sorry that the Americano troops were not yet returned. They, too, should have their fiesta. He would see that they had choice wine and chicken, and the dancing girls should amuse them,

and they would be allowed to look at his son and so be blessed. How often the rajahmundah had slept! But the sultan believed that he had been slipping back to Allah to listen to sage advice and to be given more strength. Ah, English doctors were wise, they were—

Venner and Caldwell entered the mosque.

The sultan rushed toward them effusively.

"My rajahmundah, shall I be able to see him, to hear his voice—"

It was Venner who spoke.

"For ten days, Sultan Davao, we have kept from you a secret. Kept it because your princess was not strong, and because the taos felt that a fiesta was due them. Then, too, we were waiting for our troops to return—oh, we shall be frank with you—for the secret is not a pleasant one; not one that your ears will welcome. Sultan Davao, Allah sent you a man babe—"

"He is not stricken with disease—"

The gasp in the sultan's voice turned Caldwell sick with horror for what was to follow.

"It is not disease—it is Allah's way of teaching you pity," Caldwell answered in turn. "For Allah sent your man babe with sealed eyelids—blind—like those in the Carmine refuge. Perhaps he may always be looking at Allah and never at the world—"

Caldwell drew a deep breath. He had done his best.

The pandita whispered quickly in the sultan's ear. The cadi made the protecting sign of the sacred crescent.

Then the storm burst. The sultan took the solemn curse of his religion against the blind.

"It is an everlasting visitation upon my people." He jumped the bonds of fatherhood and thought of the nation that called him leader. "I have brought shame and ruin on my subjects. Allah has punished me for my misdeeds, for giving land and good food for the blind and crippled—such as are not worthy to live." His terrible rage seemed to swerve into a temporary grief. "My people—when they hear this—to have

permitted such an institution—the mockery of it, to send a man babe blinded! Blinded! Reparation shall be made my people. Americanos, I tell you now, as a Moro sultan, no longer as a subject, that every inmate in the Carmine Institute shall die. The pandita, he has whispered that if enough human lives are offered as a sacrifice, perhaps the rajahmundah's eyes may be unsealed. Allah forgive me!"

"Sultan Davao—will you not listen—" The army surgeon held out a protesting hand.

The sultan struck at it in contempt.

"Thou!" he lapsed into the Arabic; anger made English too slow to tell his wrath. "Thou, doctor of the white liars! White doctor, such as was brought to the house of the worthless blind and crippled! Ah, the helpless, shut-eyed man babe! And yet I hate him, too. A woman babe could have been killed and forgotten. But a man babe—a blind man babe! Allah, I promise thee that I will sacrifice enough of life to satisfy thee. I promise—"

The sultan, with his pandita and his cadi, brushed by the white men. They walked out into the narrow street to get into the royal litter. There was that ominous calm in their bearing that spells danger, like the low, gray, depressing atmosphere before the out-break of a storm.

Caldwell knew where they were going—to the palace, to take the rajahmundah rudely in their arms and try to unseal his eyes; to assail Topal; to send the lighted torch from barrio to barrio; to gather the clans of Topal's people and their own so that they might storm down upon the blind colony with barbarous cruelty, and rejoice in every limp body that should weigh heavily upon the tall, broken spears of cogon grass!

The slim, winding line of dusty brown figures set Caldwell's heart to beating unbelievably fast. The army surgeon leaned against the porch of the cuartel to give silent thanks and then to shout out in harsh native to the hand-

ful of regular troopers left behind that they must be ready for work.

Up the steep pathway came the tired men, filled with tales of hardship and unaccountable delays, of sulky taos and bad food, and stiff places to march through and the skirmishing for a tenting ground where the bosque snakes and inhabitants might not bother them. Young Harvey was at the head and little Corcoran at the rear. Corcoran's arms were raw with scratches from the cogon grass and Harvey had had a heat stroke.

But there was no time to listen to their experiences. On to the Carmine Institute the men tramped, the few fresh troopers leading and Caldwell galloping along on a fleet, gray pony. They might burn the commandancia to appease Allah, if they chose—the Powers were bound to replace that—they might steal the fort plans, or the food supplies, or do what they would in the way of personal vengeance—but Aladdin's window must be finished!

Harvey rode beside Caldwell part of the way, searching with field glasses for the cloud of angry Moros preparing to burst upon them. But only the soft call of the birds and the sight of waving vegetation rewarded him.

Reaching the institute, the troops were placed in a circle about the main building, while the natives in the outside huts were taken inside, with as many food supplies and banig mats as was practical.

Then Doc Venner stood up to tell them briefly what had happened, and to warn them that for Señor Carmine's sake, as well as for the sake of the Americano government, they must be calm and not become panic-stricken. There were a thousand troops guarding them, he said, and no possible harm could come to them. That was a kind lie, as Caldwell said afterward.

As the army doctor spoke, a stillness came over the inmates, and the only ones who whimpered were two nurses from Manila and the youngish doctor. The blindies were silent—with the stoic silence that absence of vision sometimes give—while the cripples huddled to-

gether with childish faith in those whose limbs were straight.

From outside came a cry. Corcoran rushed into the hall, his usually ruddy face pale with excitement.

"Caldy, she's come here with the rajahmundah— She's come— She says— My God, Caldy, we'll be slit into ribbons for her coming—we'll be—"

"Who has come?" Caldwell made a soothing sound to the inmates.

"The Princess Topal in her litter—and she's carrying the rajahmundah. She made the troops let her pass. Send her back, Caldy! It'll make the sultan-frenzied—beside himself! He'll torture, instead of killing decently."

"I am not fearful." Topal had entered the room. Her slaves were still carrying her, and Caldwell saw the top of a small brown head nestling close against her slender, firm arm. "Leave me here and go back," she said to her slaves in the same determined voice. "Go back—before thy master knows of the flight."

Caldwell led her inside, the baby stirring in her arms. Sinking back among the cushions that Caldwell placed for her, she smiled at him gently.

"Why did you come?" asked Caldwell, after a long, silent look had passed between them. "You know how desperate the situation, the added graveness of affairs—will you not return? You realize how women are treated who do such things as this—even a princess?"

The rajahmundah sobbed in his sleep. Topal bent swiftly to kiss his face.

"My son is blind," she said swiftly, "and I love him. Señor Carmine loved his blind people. If any harm come to these people, the same harm should justly come to my child. He belongs here. That is all."

For an instant Caldwell forgot the terror that hung over them, the approaching massacre, the fagged troops liable to collapse under the additional strain, the debt; he saw only Topal, with her grayish-blue eyes and long, dark braids, holding the tiny boy so

gently, and speaking with a wisdom that he could never quite comprehend.

"And you have found motherhood the great leveler, little Topal?" he asked. "Ah, if only Carmine had cut through his other window!"

"I do not know about windows," Topal answered. "I am so tired—and the sultan has been very angry with me. I have come for protection as well as for justice. See, I am not strong." She held out a trembling hand. "You will not send me back?"

"Not if it means the last man of us lying useless before the doorway," Caldwell promised.

Topal snatched his hand to kiss it eagerly. There was a strange smile on her face that Caldwell could not fathom. Topal did not know of figurative "windows," but in her heart a long-strangled, silent hope—a hope born among Moro women many generations ago—had flamed into being. Topal was brave. She had the rare courage that surpasses the courage of men. But like such brave persons, she kept it hidden safely until the crucial time in which to prove its usefulness.

Caldwell closed the door gently. Topal smiled at him again—a mystic, cloudlike smile that let the sadness and the tragedy peep through the pastel mirth.

"Caldy, won't she go back?" asked the army surgeon frantically. "When her flight is known, the sultan—Caldy, you know what he'll do. He'll torture and then kill, like pulling the wings of insects off, one by one, and then crushing. We'll be—"

"I was thinking," said Caldwell slowly. "I've a little money I don't exactly need. How much have you, Venner, after your furlough?"

"A few hundred, and Harvey has his—"

"Pshaw!" Caldwell laughed at the absurdity of it. "As if money would buy him off now! What can we do? Shoot hell into the first row of approaching Moros, and be shot down like men by the second!"

"And she will not go back?"

"She has the right to stay—she brings us the blind rajahmundah, and gives him into our charge. He is one of us."

"Too bad"—the army surgeon was slightly hysterical—"that Topal wasn't the rajahmundah's father!"

Outside came a signal of alarm. Down the field of waving cogon, with its narrow, catlike trail, scarcely perceptible save to trained eyes, marched the sultan's army. One by one, the brown, almost naked figures crawled their way toward the institute. Caldwell thanked God that Señor Carmine had surrounded the buildings with sunny, pleasant gardens; at least there could be no back-handed attack, no scaling of *cota* walls, and strangling of men unawares.

But the American flag marched as well, and the sultan marched beside it—a sign of peace! The figure of the high priest was barely discernible.

The troopers looked at Caldwell for a signal. Was this a ruse, devoid of honor, to keep the troops from instant firing—the display of mock allegiance to make an opportunity for a sudden, mad swoop and onslaught? But Caldwell, who had known the sultan's father, and who had seen the sultan himself take his oath of allegiance, felt his instinctive appeal to the honor that the Americanos had tried to teach him.

"Salute!" he yelled hoarsely, while Harvey and Corcoran muttered oaths under their breath.

"Caldy—it's murder—they'll——"

"Salute!" repeated Caldwell grimly.

Inside, the blind were singing an old New England hymn that one of the nurses had taught them. The broken English jarred on Caldwell's ears. It was all so horrible, so unnecessary! What was the goal, what was the gain? For one mad second, he longed to tear down the American flag beside him and prostrate himself before the Moros while he apologized to them for having uprooted old ideas and ethics. He longed to tell them to go back to the ways of their fathers and forgive the white man's intrusion. It all seemed a hopeless mistake, the traces of which it would take long to obliterate. Car-

mine's work, so well meant, but so destructive in its ending—

"Now the- day ees over,
Night is drawing nigh-h,
Leesten, leetle cheeldren,
To the Savior's—"

It seemed as if the sounds from within would drive him mad, but he said, "Salute!" for a third time, and put one numb arm to his cap band in reverence to the stripes.

Every brown hand obeyed him.

A cloud of dust from a sudden wind hid the approaching army. They could see only dim objects advancing.

Inside, the hymn had been finished and they had begun "America." An old, quavering tenor voice led.

"My countree—tis of thee-e,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of the-e—we seeng—"

The dust had cleared. The flag still swung in the breeze, and the sultan clutched no sword with his hand; instead, he gave a return salute. Even the pandita's arms were folded.

Within fifty feet of the troops, the sultan stopped his men. Alone, with only the pandita as escort, he crossed into the gardens. Caldwell met him.

The sultan waved aside the cowering troops with an air of indifference; he knew so well how shattered they were, how easy it would be to conquer. That was not what he wanted, not what he had come for. Nor did he care for the blind within, or for the money that he had lost. Superstition had leaped up foremost in the tangle, and the long, thin-faced pandita had suggested to him the climax of the situation.

"She is here?" asked the pandita respectfully—the pandita was always respectful.

"She came of her own seeking," Caldwell retorted.

"So we learned." The pandita faced the sultan as if to say, "You can surely have no further delay."

"We must talk with you inside." The pandita still carried the conversation.

The army surgeon would have interfered, but Caldwell gave him no opportunity.

"The blind and crippled have come together under fear of an attack," he admitted. "The presence of our flag among your men told us that such was not the case. Into the small office—Carmine's office—and without the pandita, sire."

The sultan made no protest. His face was set in stern, firm lines. The pandita had merely been a convenience for conversation. He knew so utterly what he was about to do that the presence of the whole world or of no one would make no difference. The pandita, however, felt that the plan was being wedged into. He made a faint murmur that it would be better otherwise. But the sultan, like one in a dream, followed Caldwell.

The office led into the room where Topal had been sitting with her baby, listening to the troopers' talk, to the singing, to Caldwell's command to salute, to the suave voice of the pandita. Now, she would listen to her husband, and hear what he had come for. Now—now was the time for courage!

"Topal cannot come back with you unless you promise her kind treatment." Caldwell plunged into the midst of the topic recklessly. "She is not fit to bear your anger. As for money, Sultan Davao, we, personally, can give to you the—"

"There is but one thing to do." The sultan's voice had lost its boyish, angry ring; it was that of a powerful man. "Such an act on the part of a Moro woman is unheard of—it is Allah's final warning to take sure steps. Bah, you may keep the pesos, the land, you may keep your troopers from battle! They are soft, with women's arms when it comes to handling the sword. That is not it—it is the man babe's sealed eyes. And those can be opened. Topal must die as the human sacrifice supreme—these worthless things within are not worth the killing. The priests have decreed it in the mosque—and when we came for Topal, she had fled, showing her guilt. The child will be cared for by the women of the harem. Topal must die. Not until then will the man babe's sight be given him!"

The sultan was calm, even deliberate; he waited for Caldwell's approval.

But as Caldwell hesitated, the low door was pushed back, and Topal's voice said in native, "Rigal, my husband—you wish for my death?"

The sultan turned—one mad flush of love for her came into his heart; but the sight of the small, brown head held tightly in her arms, and the thought of the pandita, drove away any weakness.

"You must die," he told her. "You have disgraced your people, you have left them, you have brought ruin on us. To unseal the eyes, you must die!"

"I will die," Topal said calmly, "because I am a Moro woman—not a man. You or your men would not die for the man babe; you wish to live for him and for all that he may bring to you in the way of glory. But I, who love so much, whose mother pains have brought courage and knowledge, I will die! I will not disgrace my people in death. See, you may shoot me with the Americano rifle or plunge your creese into my heart—the heart that has beat always for you, my husband; or you may burn me suttee fashion, as they do in India, with an image for my husband, so that no blame be ever attached to you; you may poison me in the mosque. It matters not, Only see that the little, lonesome one has good care—harem women are careless. And the eyes will not unseal, my husband; the good Allah sent him to teach you a great truth."

"You die willingly?"

The sultan looked at her in amazement, every tender emotion and memory of their betrothal and marriage rose up to choke the anger and crowd it back.

"Would you die for the man babe?" asked Topal.

The sultan was silent.

"Would you face death for him?"

The robes of her loose costume hid the child absolutely.

"Would you die for him?" Still that same, grave voice.

"No," the sultan answered with a wild burst of truth; "not—not—for a babe—not for that, my Topal. In war, in battle—but not for a babe!"

Topal knew that victory was near at hand.

"And yet—you are a brave man—and a woman is a thing to be tolerated. Ah, my Rigal, long after I am dead, you will think of this and you will say, 'Topal loved me—she died because I wished her to—'"

But love had mastered him, admiration for her supremacy of courage.

"Thou shalt not die," he cried in Arabic. "Topal, I, too, should die; if thou were taken from me—"

He bowed his head against the wall, acknowledging to himself that the love that civilization had taught him could defeat that which his forefathers had trained him to be supreme in.

"Topal!" he cried, turning back to her with outstretched arms. They had forgotten Caldwell. But Topal did not come to him. Instead, she placed in them the sleeping baby—and a sudden, overpowering love and fierce tenderness for the tiny-limbed being came into his heart.

"Tell me," he said weakly, searching her gravely beautiful face, "what wouldst thou have me do?"

And Topal answered with a simplicity born of innocence and without hint of missionary drilling:

"Treat those who see not as thou wouldst treat him or have him treated—for each is the treasure of some woman!"

A soft cry broke the pause that followed. Looking down at the flat little face, the sultan saw two dark, blinky eyes staring up at him!

"Allah—the eyes—a miracle!" he sobbed, holding the child out to Caldwell that he might see what had happened.

"No miracle—but the learning of a great truth," Topal answered, her voice breaking a bit with intensity. "See, you are looking at the rajahmundah, the beautiful man babe for whom you so long prayed. Did you think, my husband, that I did not hear the English captain asking mercy for the blind—the day of the rajahmundah's birth? Was I deaf? And are the walls of stone? Ah, even then I planned to make you

learn to help them willingly. And then—then came the rajahmundah. And that same night, little Mata, the slave girl, had a man babe given her—but its eyes were sealed; four hours after birth, the eyes were sealed. And in her terror of the cruelty that would befall it—the reproach in her voice made the sultan drop his eyes—“she crawled to the basket of the rajahmundah and, while the English doctor was speaking with you, she placed her man babe within it and took mine. Ah, mothers do much more for the children they bear! For ten days, the English doctor labored to open the eyes. I, alone, had seen what the slave girl did—but she did not know. And because I, too, had learned of motherhood, along with a slave, I waited to see if my husband would accept fatherhood with the same bigness of understanding! Not even English schools teach that, my Rigal.

“Your anger must not turn to little Mata—but to yourself. For she did it for her child alone. Has she not been a slave for sixteen years and stood the lash and the market place? What was before her child but mistreatment and cruel branding? But the rajahmundah would be raised in happy richness. I love the slave girl for it—and I kept her secret. I waited—waited to do what I have done. When Mata learned that I was in danger, she came to me and confessed, offering to die. Have you so loyal a slave or so brave a soldier? And I gave her back her blind babe and sent her away, promising safety. I came here with the rajahmundah to see what punishment you would demand of me, what lies you would listen to from the pandita who crouches outside. And it was death, my Rigal—was that not severe? Ah,” the quiver of tenderness in her voice made it sound like a lullaby, “you can make your rajahmundah grow into the brave warrior you wished him to be—and together, you and I, we will teach him pity for the weak!”

The sultan knelt at her feet. Cald-

well, whose long years had been spent among them, had never once witnessed such an act. But the sultan knelt there and prayed to her for forgiveness, for strength, for insight. Somehow he dimly felt that to pray to Allah would be futile; a man deity would not quite understand!

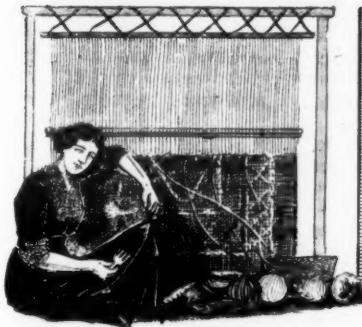
Topal bent to kiss his head softly. Then she reached for her son.

“I am tired—and little Mata is so anxious—I think, my husband, I think we shall go back.”

A week later, a dispatch from the proprietor of a small inn in southern France reached the comandance. There was a long bill, cabled at the government's expense, an announcement of the quick, painless death of one Nevada Hugo who had come there the previous night. The innkeeper also stated that there were papers telling of money for the Carmine Blind Institute in Mindanao, papers concerning investments. He presumed that it was an official affair, so he had cabled at once. The man had no heirs or friends—and there was much money. Would some one come and investigate the matter, or should the consul be given authority to act?

Caldwell took the message over the wire himself. He read it aloud to the army surgeon and the two lieutenants. But before he had finished, they began telling him to start packing his traps—the steamer sailed in the morning; this would be a fine excuse for a whirl at Paris and a look in at Monte Carlo. Of course he was going—no such thing as saying no, there wasn't a possible objection.

So Caldwell let them haul his old black bag out, and begin swearing as to what and what not he had room for. But he knew that Aladdin's window would be finished; and not only that—but that another window had been cut in the same figurative palace; a window that would light the harem, and at which Moro women, holding fast to Topal's courageous hands, might gather and, looking out, see the truth.



The LISTENING LADY BY Carrington Phelps

IT was in the middle of Bellwater footbridge that I first saw her, walking softly toward me in her coarse little gray gown and jacket. I had left Gryce, the village man of all work, at his task of reshingling the old cottage that I had just purchased, while I sought the pleasanter diversions of a pipe and of feeding the trout. Presently, I had become aware of footsteps on the narrow planking behind me, and, as I heard them draw near, I turned and saw a woman of perhaps three and thirty, bareheaded, carrying a slender cherry cane, and approaching directly upon me. It was apparent that we would collide unless one of us made way, and yet, so sudden and abrupt was her unwavering advance, that I could only stand there in a sort of helpless surprise, and, at the last instant, and by an effort of will, cough desperately. For, in that instant, and from a glance at her eyes, I knew her to be blind.

Instantly she paused, and her face flashed into a smile that reassured me, and a delicate color came into her cheeks.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, in a voice like music. "I did not know any one was here."

"Yes," said I confusedly. "I was feeding the trout."

She turned her face toward the water, a fine face, with its delicate brows, its dependable forehead, its firm, yet sensitively modeled, chin.

"Throw something to them," she said. "I love to hear them."

I tossed a handful of crumbs, and the surface of the brook was instantly slashed by a dozen struggling and voracious little bodies.

She laughed delightedly.

"That's when they're *very* hungry." She bent her head, listening. "Little pigs!"

By some swift alchemy, she seemed subtly changing, as if, through the woman's face, a young girl had begun shyly to peep, with dimpling cheek and roguish droop of mouth, and that flashing, winsome smile again and quickening color.

She turned her gray eyes far beyond me.

"If you go down to the big, flat rock, yonder," she pointed with her little stick, "you can feed them from your hand, and even *feel* them. I do, on warm moonlight nights, so the boys won't know." She stepped to the opposite handrail. "Don't let them see you, else they'd snare them."

With a faint inclination of her head, she passed on, full of quick buoyancy, of a certain voluptuous vigor, and yet curiously giving one the impression that she was listening to, or listening for, some faint and distant voice. The gracious lines of her slender figure defied her clumsy garb.

I watched her, marveling, until she disappeared among the pines of the opposite bank. Her grace, her rare sweet-

ness of manner, the very tones of her voice, were as much at variance with the atmosphere of this ascetic New England village as they were alien to its bleakly shrewd inhabitants.

The anomaly piqued me, and I sought out Gryce, as being the nearest and most probable informant. I found him perched dizzily on a cornice, shingling, with serene indifference to the thirty-foot drop beneath, or to the heavy wind that was blowing above.

He arose slowly, in answer to my question, stretching his long legs, and shook the ashes from his pipe over the brink. He was a shy and silent man, deep-voiced, with a lean, brown face, and slumbrous eyes, and a habit of looking off into distances. Even now he stood there, taller than ever against the blue sky, peering down the valley a ruminative moment before replying.

"That," he pronounced slowly, "was Miss Tanner."

A flood of amazed illumination poured in upon me. So this was the "old Miss Tanner" of whom, in casual village gossip, I had heard so much, and with so little interest! For I knew her now as the daughter of that minister who, having eked out a precarious existence between an unremunerative calling and a rock-ribbed farm, had ultimately succumbed, leaving behind him a mortgage that straightway had swallowed everything save the tiny house that now sheltered his sole survivor. His wife, so whispered the historians, had preceded him by several years, in canny evasion of a struggle that had seemed hopeless from the outset.

The daughter, who lived quite alone, supported herself by the rugs that she wove on an ancient loom and disposed of for a pittance. But—and here was the curious part—though they called her queer, and condemned her as much for her aloofness as for her poverty, yet never by word or sign that I might note had they alluded to her infirmity. The mistakes of the dead, the peccadillos of the living, were all fair prey; but this, like Old Man Starkweather's wooden leg, or Mrs. Coffee's rheuma-

tism, had been quite passed over as a thing familiar and unimportant.

And yet, it seemed to me to take on the grim relentlessness of tragedy.

"Why," I exclaimed vaguely, "she's blind!"

Gryce made no reply, but a patient smile flickered across his lips.

"How long has she been so?" I asked. "How did it happen?"

He began deliberately to remove a portion of deadly-looking tobacco from the peculiar twist that he always carried.

"Blind since a girl," he answered. "Kettle of lye spilt. Got in her eyes."

He rolled the weed in his palm, and filled his pipe painstakingly.

I asked if he thought she had any rugs for sale.

"City folks buys most on 'em." He paused to light. "I b'lieve she's got some," he continued, puffing slowly. "I b'lieve I seen some Sat'day, when I was mendin' her floor."

A sudden, vicious gust swept off some shingles, and bore down furiously, with almost animal ferocity, upon the gaunt figure that leaned out against it into space. I restrained an impulse to cry out.

"You'll fall down," I said.

He still gazed down the long reaches, straightening as the gust subsided. With a quizzical expression on his bronzed face, "I'm well used to it," he answered.

"I'll look at those rugs to-morrow," I declared, and then I went hastily away, because it was not pleasant to see Joseph Gryce balancing on an abyss, watching clouds.

But I did not go on that to-morrow, or on the next day, for the pressure of setting my house in order kept me hurrying busily for a week. My garden had to be plowed, and its great stone wall relaid, my rosebushes wrapped, my apple trees pruned, and all things made snug and tight until another summer should come around. But the afternoon before my return to the city, I remembered my promised visit to the rugmaker.

I found her little house, though close

upon the street, set in a nest of vines and shrubbery, with mignonette and lavender at either side its stone-flagged walk, and a great honeysuckle vine about its old Dutch door. As I came to the step, I heard the rattle of harness and the thud of the treadle that told me the loom was busy. I tapped the ancient knocker, and the sounds ceased, and steps came to the door; then it opened gently, and she stood again before me in the coarse dress and heavy shoes, smiling a little and listening, with that faint, expectant flush in her cheeks.

"I came," I said, "to see if I could buy a rug."

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "The man who fed the trout! Won't you come in?" And she stepped aside to let me pass.

It was a quaint, old room, with paneled wainscoting, and shuttered windows, and gray, wide-planked flooring, and a grandfather's clock ticking off the centuries, and a kettle humming blithely from its crane above the fire. There was a queer, elusive odor in the air, as of some faint, forgotten perfume—of the herbs, perhaps, that I saw suspended from the ceiling of the next room, or of cellared fruits, or of some closet incense for protecting clothes, or—and likeliest of all—of the seasoned, aromatic old house itself. And about the bare oaken flooring and heavy, well-worn furniture, and the luminously curtained windows, and the brooding fire, there was an air of cloistral peace, of unconquerable repose.

"I'm just making tea," she said. "You will join me?" She smilingly indicated a high-backed settle beside the fireplace. "Won't you sit here? You see, once I have you placed, I can talk to you."

She turned to a corner cupboard, and began swiftly setting out the tea things upon a lacquered tray.

I had fair opportunity now to observe her. Her rich brown hair was twisted about her head in two great braids, and tucked into an odd, old-fashioned knot at the back, with wisps of it curling rebelliously at the nape of

the neck. A little gold, encircling chain lent, with its tiny locket, an air of naïve and intimate daring, yet of charming modesty, to the full, bare throat. Her hands were very thin, and straight, and long, but the finger tips were red from work, and calloused. I watched those hands in amazement, as they flew deftly among the old pink cups and saucers, fluttering faintly as they neared their object, like little white birds before alighting.

It was purely an involuntary impulse that made me ask presently whether I could not be of assistance.

She turned to me, her mouth a smiling droop, her brows arching faintly.

"Do you think I need help, then?" she asked.

Terrified, I mumbled some hasty protest.

"No," she continued, bringing forward a little three-legged table, and placing the tray upon it. "I am used to doing for myself. It isn't hard. You've only to know where each thing is. It's quite simple, then. You see, you get the habit of remembering after a while, and, anyway, I don't have a lot of cluttery things about. Then, you know, I've lived in this house so long"—she paused a musing instant—"almost too long to remember, and I know every inch of it."

Her hand went to the crane, fluttered, touched and took up the kettle. A huge black cat padded from the other room, mewed softly, and clawed her dress.

"This," she said, "is my evil spirit. He's the one who tangles my yarns and skeins, and then somebody has to come and tell me the colors again. I don't mind, though, because he makes life unexpected and eventful—like fate, perhaps. Or," she added, with what might have been a hint of wistfulness, "chance."

She seemed abnormally sensitive, not to her infirmity itself, but to the possibility that it might be considered as such, or that she might be held less capable on its account.

We sipped our tea, and talked of neighborhood subjects, and of her bees,

and of a squirrel who hopped to the window expectantly and whom she fed, telling me how he always came punctually at this hour. There was an eagerness in all she said, as if, like her squirrel, she were hungry for crumbs from the world without. It was apropos of some remark of mine expressing regret at my departure next day that a little of the veil that hid the woman was, as it were, lifted.

"Sorry!" she echoed. "You should rejoice at your fortune, sir. Oh," she exclaimed, with sudden bitterness, "you can't know what the dreary, weary winter here is like, with its cold, and ice, and bitter winds; with every living thing in hiding—the very birds, too! And the months, and days, and hours pass so slowly! You may be glad that you are not staying." Her voice had hardened, and it rang passionately in the quiet room. "Sorry to go! And from what—except solitude and desolation?"

She paused, and I thought that her face softened again, but whether with composure, or indifference, or despair, I could not guess.

"Where do you go?" she asked.

As I pronounced the name, a responsive flicker crossed her face.

"Oh!" she cried eagerly; and then, with what I could not but interpret as forced indifference, "You like New York?"

I made a leading answer.

"Yes," she said animatedly. "I've been there. We lived on Long Island. I went to school in the city two whole years. It was wonderful. Then my uncle died, and we came here to his farm—so long ago. But I've never forgotten the city, the great, glorious city!"

She turned to me, and again I caught the eagerness behind her restraint.

"Do you ever go down where the ships come in on South Street?"

"Yes," I said. "I often walk there Sundays."

"Oh!" with a delight that would not be controlled. "Oh! Isn't that odd? Because I used to go there Sundays, and smell the tarry ropes, and the spices, and the sea water, and watch

the ships loading and unloading, and coming in and sailing out. Is it very much changed? Are there still old cannon sticking up at the street corners and great sailing ships at the wharves? Are there many sailors about, with their funny trousers, and smoking their terrible tobacco?"

"It's just about the same," I lied shamelessly; "cannon, ships, sailors, and all."

"And you go there often? On the ships, too?"

Had she possessed sight, I should have said that she was watching me keenly. As it was, her habitual air of listening seemed more intense, too intense, it seemed to me, for what could be only a casual answer.

"Sometimes," I said.

She smiled, an excited little smile, and bit her lips.

"I shouldn't like it—on the ships," she murmured, with a disinterest that was belied by the pathetic clumsiness of its effort. "And do you know many seafaring folk, captains, and the like?"

"Quite a number."

I exaggerated somewhat, my chief acquaintance being one Fenelon, whose father owned a line of schooners. But I was curious to find out what this little lady was endeavoring to discover, since on discovery of some sort she was clearly bent.

"You must come some day, and visit it all again," I said at random.

An expression almost of pain crossed her sensitive face.

"No!" she cried sharply. "I couldn't bear that," and she leaned to the fire.

Beyond doubt, there was something behind all this of poignant interest to her, something that she wished to talk of and that I as earnestly wished to know. But further pursuit was suddenly denied us by the sound of heavy steps approaching along the rear walk.

"My extra treadle," she explained, and hurried back to open the door.

A man's voice, harsh and grating, greeted her.

"How did you expect me to mend that rotten thing?" it demanded sav-

agely. "It smashed first off, and I had to make a new one."

Her own voice fell soothingly, in faint little deprecatory murmurs.

"Sorry fiddlesticks!" interrupted the man. "That don't help any. Where's your hammer?"

I listened curiously, for only the most vindictive mood could have inspired such evident malice. It was as gratuitous a piece of viciousness as I had ever heard; nor, puzzle as I might, could I place its author. Followed a sound of pounding.

"*There!*" The man stepped to the table, and threw down the tool. The action brought him within my line of vision, and, as he turned, he glanced toward me. He stopped, staring; but no more stupidly than I myself. It was Joseph Gryce.

For an instant, he stood there dumfounded, bewilderment befogging his face; then panic seized him, and he fled, deaf to her polite little weather word of leave-taking.

"What ailed Gryce?" I asked, as she returned.

She laughed.

"Oh, nothing. He's always like that. At first, I used to be terribly afraid of him, but I don't think he really means anything by it. It's just his way."

I looked at her closely, for the Gryce that I and all the village knew was a creature of lamblike and ridiculous meekness. But she was serene and smiling, apparently quite sincere in her belief.

We talked for a little longer, but the spell was broken. I could not lure her back to her mysterious desire. Presently I took my leave, after purchasing two wonderfully woven rugs at a preposterous bargain, but one that I dared not dispute, lest that ever-watchful pride of hers should spy out my motives.

The next morning, I was up before daylight, ready for the seven-mile ride to the railroad station. I had arranged with Gryce to take me in; but, to my surprise, one of the neighbor's boys appeared in his stead, with the information that Gryce was ill in bed. It was

evident that, after the scene of the day before, he had no desire to face me.

There was a luminous glow in the east, forerunner of the dawn, and, as we passed the little house of the blind woman, I heard again the steady throb of the loom that told me its mistress was already at work in the darkness that was always hers.

For a time, the actors in this little round passed out of my life, and, in the stress and concentration of a busy profession, out of my very thoughts. Winter came and passed, and was followed by that dismal and uncertain interlude—the dreariest of the year—just before spring. Then suddenly occurred the incident that brought again before me that gray, little village mystery; more tragic, more immutable than ever.

In connection with a damage suit that he was bringing, I had occasion to look over one of Fenelon's schooners, moored a few blocks from my office. As I returned, I stopped to watch the swift and furious unloading of a banana ship that had just arrived at the same pier. She swarmed with men; uproar and chaos seemed rampant; yet, through it all, without a pause, from hatchways out to waiting trucks flowed great fruit clusters. A tall, angular fellow in a blue suit and cap, and wearing a short mustache, was perched atop a swinging boom, directing the operation with oaths and sharp, nervous orders. After a moment's fascinated staring, I passed on.

The next morning, I was called to the telephone to talk to a man who said that he was Gryce. I asked what Gryce was talking, and he said:

"The Gryce you saw yesterday—"

He stopped, as if hesitating.

"I didn't see any Gryce," I said, and instantly the receiver at the other end was hung up.

Change of scene often erases the memory of people in an old environment until the latter is recalled. At first I could not even remember having known a Gryce, though the name was oddly familiar to me. Presently I thought of the village, then of its man

of all work, but I was positive that I had not seen him the previous day, though I reconstructed every hour of it. Suddenly I sensed a vague clew, too subtly intangible even to grasp. I went to sleep that night puzzling over it. Next morning, as I awakened, I caught the thing. What I was trying to remember was the man who had directed the unloading of the fruit ship, his easy, graceful movements, his crafty balancing. Then, in a flash, I had the two. The man was Gryce. Now that I reflected, I would have known that catlike poise among a thousand.

But how transformed he was in this, his proper, environment! Say, rather, how transformed he had been in the alien rôle of a landsman! I found it difficult to reconcile the two personalities, and there were even moments when I doubted my own conclusions; for I remembered Gryce as a rustic of rustics, quiet and immobile, with broad-brimmed straw hat, suspended blue jeans tucked into cowhide boots, an old blue shirt, an eternal corncob pipe. I perceived how studied had been his pose, how extreme the character, as if he had been an actor presenting the type. But I also remembered his sailor's trick of gazing into distances, his rolling stride, his careless balancing on the roof that windy day, and I marveled at my stupidity in not having then detected a hint of the seaman, so clearly outlined in retrospection. But why his ridiculous rural masquerade; why his entire change of character; and why his evident desire for concealment, were questions beyond me.

And then I worked out the line of reasoning that he had followed. He had seen me watching him; had thought that I recognized him. He had called me up, and then, finding that I had not noticed him, had rung off without betraying himself.

Within a week, I met him face to face, when I went up to arrange for my summer planting and the clean-up preliminary to my summer occupation of the cottage. He was almost the first person I encountered, and he was the

same old, smooth-shaven, shambling, rustic Gryce, even to the lip-dangled straw. For an instant, I almost doubted my senses. As he recognized me, an expression of shamefaced bewilderment crossed his features. He caught himself instantly, though, as we exchanged the conventional commonplaces. And yet, so convincing was his rusticity that later I asked the postmaster if he had not been in town all winter.

"Nope," he cried. "He goes West, winters. Got a claim."

That settled the last doubt in my mind. But it did not make things any clearer. I had seen him now in three different roles—the rustic, the sailor, and, when he had brought in Miss Tanner's treadle on the day of my call, the vicious-tempered fiend. I recalled her naïve defense of him—"It's just his way"—and, mindful of her vivid interest in things of the sea, wondered if there could be some strange tie binding them together, some malevolent secret, some hatred. Assuredly there must be a motive, at least on his side, for such venom. But, when I remembered her childlike simplicity and her gentle kindness, I put away all idea of her complicity in the affair. I even tried to think it all coincidence, but the thing persisted—her wistful sea hunger, her ever air of listening to a sound not quite distinct; his extraordinary manner toward her, his secret calling. Gradually it came to have the significance of a mystery, a secret tragedy, brooding and momentous.

Whatever it was, Gryce held the key. Knowing that he held it, I, if any, could make him use it. That night I sent for him to help me about a telephone. He came at once, and unsuspecting.

"Telephone broke?" he asked.

"Sit down," I said, and drew up before the open fire. "It's not about this one, Gryce. It's about the telephone call I got in town—from you."

A startled expression flashed over his face, which was as instantly veiled.

"Ya-as," he drawled. "I was in the city, and I see you on the street, an' telephoned, but they cut me off."

"You mean you saw me at the banana ship," I said.

"Whut?" lazily.

"You saw me watching you at the banana ship."

He looked at me, and, for a fractional instant, I saw something murderous glint in his eyes. His voice, his entire bearing, changed instantly. I found myself confronted, as it were, by a man of the world.

"So," he said, "you found me out, after all. What are you going to do? Spread the glad news?"

"That will depend," I said. "For one thing, if you continue bullying little Miss Tanner, I've got to know a good reason."

He eyed me sharply.

"Have you told anybody else about this?"

I said that I had not.

"Good! You won't, I think, when you know the facts." He seemed to consider a moment. "I may as well tell you everything, since you know what you know. I guess you're decent enough to keep it to yourself."

He regarded me thoughtfully.

"Your locating me was the one rotten piece in the whole rope. I knew it would come, sooner or later. I've dreaded it for years. I'm glad you gave me a chance to explain first. My right name is Thomas Greet. She knows me as Gryce—doesn't dream I'm any other, and I'd cut off a hand sooner than have her."

He crossed one leg over the other, and stared at the fire.

"Well?" I said. "Why did you change your name?"

A slow flush crept into his bronzed face.

"It's all sort of strange," he mused. "I was thinking how to say it. I never told it before."

I waited patiently.

"I used to know her, fifteen years past, when we went to school. I wanted her to marry me, but she wouldn't, not being fond enough. I was pretty wild those days, and one night I got drunk and hurt a man. I had to run for it, but at that I managed to see her

first, and, when I told her what had happened, she jumped back as if I were a snake. Said she never wanted to see me again."

Deprecatingly, he glanced at me.

"Her father was a minister, so you couldn't blame her. That night, I went to sea—mad for trouble. I roamed up and down the world, wilder than ever; but, the wilder I went, the more I thought of her, and the harder I fought it, the harder it held me. So, after a time, I knew it was no use fighting, because she was the only woman for me. Sometimes it gets you that way, and you never know till afterward. So I sent her a letter, but she wrote back what she had said at first about not wanting to see me again. Then I sobered down to hard work, because it was that or going to hell."

He paused again, lost in memory, while the fire sputtered, and danced, and threw strange shapes upon the wall.

"Well," he went on slowly, "she never did see me again, just like she wanted. For years after, when I'd laid a bit aside and thought of a little rest, I wondered about her, and searched and searched, and finally found her alone up here—and blind. In a way, it was good, because I was able to be near, and she couldn't know. So, I've shipped every winter, and earned a tidy little sum, and come here summers. I changed my name, and acted like the other rubes, so she wouldn't know. And, when I'd be around her, I'd always talk ugly, which changed my voice, and she's never suspected. It gives me a chance to see her, and help her, and do for her, which couldn't be if she knew."

There was a little silence, and he turned to me the calm and patient face that I had first known; the face that I now realized was the real face; the face of Thomas Greet.

"You see why she mustn't ever know? You see why you can't tell anybody who I am?"

"Yes," I said, "but perhaps it wouldn't be so if she knew; perhaps she feels differently now toward Greet."

"No!" he exclaimed, in alarm. "No!"

Greet is through, for good and all. I'm Gryce, now, and I won't risk losing that, too, d'ye understand? I won't risk it."

I saw that the idea was unthinkable to him. He had acted the part of Gryce so long, and so sincerely, that any other was inconceivable. He had lost much in life; I could not blame him for clinging resolutely to what wreckage remained. So I agreed to keep the secret, and, after some further and unimportant talk, he took his departure.

The next morning, I set out for the home of the rugmaker. With quickening pulse, I lifted the knocker, and, as I heard those light footsteps approaching, it seemed, for an instant, as if I were again making my first visit, expectant, and thrilled with anticipation. But the illusion vanished when she opened the door, for, although there was the old, eager alertness in her face and the same quick color, yet I detected a change, as if trouble, or sorrow, had shadowed her serenity.

A sly impulse bade me omit my name in my greeting, but she knew my voice instantly, and clapped her hands in delight.

"The first city bird!" she cried. "And your trout are *so* hungry!"

She ushered me in, and roused up the fire, and brought out the tea things again, all the while chattering as gaily as a child, and with a zest that evidenced a literal famine for human society. I recognized such forgotten touches as the forlorn little droop of the mouth, belied by its curving kindness; the protestant lift of the eyebrows; the dimpled chin; and the sweep of soft brown hair over the brow. Yet, across it all, the shadow cast by care was heavy.

There was much news, she told me, and some scandal, in this little eddy of civilization. Old Deacon Foote had been arrested for snaring partridge; the Enright house had burned; Mrs. Willie Smith had a baby; and the annual movement was afoot to oust the minister.

Presently, "But I haven't let you say

a word!" she exclaimed. "How is my wonderful city?"

"Your city is still more wonderful."

"Do you know something?" She lowered her voice to a confidential whisper. "Don't tell a soul. I'm *going* there!"

I expressed proper amazement.

"Yes. I'm going next winter. I'm leaving this place for good and all."

My amazement was now sincere as I asked the reason.

"I'm tired," she said, "just tired. This winter has been more terrible than any. I've thought sometimes I'd go mad. It sounds silly, now, doesn't it? —even to me. Then, too, I don't make much from rugs, because they manufacture them now so cheaply, though," with a flash of pride, "they can't compare with the hand-woven ones. I'm going back to my city, and I'm going to get work—oh, anything!—and make money, and be among people once more, and hear music—and— Oh, I'm going!"

She broke off abruptly and turned to the china closet.

I thought of this gentle, naïve soul thrown into the midst of that seething tumult, ignorant of the terrible struggle, the swift, merciless competition; and I thought of the hurrying throng of haggard sweatshop workers, of her, perhaps, among them, a fragile vine striving to climb without support. What chance for her, I thought.

"But let's not talk about it," she continued. "Tell me about yourself—what you've been doing since you were here."

I said deliberately, "I have been taking a sailing voyage."

Instantly she was all attention.

"Have you? Oh, where?"

"Down the coast, on a lumber schooner, for my nerves. It was quite exciting. We lost a man overboard, but the mate jumped after him and saved him. It was a brave thing."

"Yes," she said. "They take their lives in their hands—sailors."

"I made great friends with this mate," I went on. "He's promised to come and visit me." Then, with an

elaborate effort to change the subject: "That's an interesting face, that portrait over the mantel. Any relation?"

"That's my grandfather. He was a minister."

"Yes," I continued meditatively, "this chap Greet will spend a week with me, at least, I hope."

I was facing the portrait, and, reflected in its glass surface, I saw her rise suddenly, her hands at her breast. She caught her breath.

"An interesting portrait," I said.

"What—was the man's name?" she asked, and all her skill could not keep the quiver from her voice.

"Greet," I answered briskly, returning to my chair. "Name is Greet."

"That—that's strange. I knew a sailor once whose name was Greet."

She laughed, a forced little laugh, striving bravely to control the face that I could so safely, cruelly watch.

"Probably not the same," I said. "There're plenty of Greets. This one's first name was—let me see—John—no; Tom, yes, Thomas, I think it was—"

"Yes—yes—" she cried.

"Thomas. That was it. Thomas Greet."

She stood there, staring past me, with her clenched hands thrust behind her, and I saw the color drop from her face like a pink veil.

"Yes," I babbled, "Thomas Greet. He may be up to see me this week."

It roused her.

"When?" she cried. "Thomas Greet! This week!"

"Yes. Why? Is it *your* Thomas Greet? You know Thomas is a common enough name."

"Yes. It is, isn't it? I mustn't forget that." She turned, and poured me a cup of tea. "I forgot—your tea," she stammered, and gave it to me with a trembling hand.

"It would be strange, though, if it were the Thomas Greet you know," I suggested.

"What is he like? Is he brown—and tall—and—and handsome?"

"Yes. And quiet. And very shy?" She bit her lip, her old trick.

"Thomas wasn't that."

"He's changed, perhaps, in the years."

A glimmering shadow of fear crossed her face.

"Oh! In the years!" she echoed. "The cruel years! We women change so. And he'd see it when he looked at me. Not as I see him, always. Tell me," with sudden, fierce recklessness, "am I old?"

"No. I think you are very young."

She stamped her foot.

"The truth. They say I'm old. Am I?"

"Who says so?"

"The children, stealing my pears one day. 'Watch for old Miss Tanner,' they said. So they *all* must say it. And I must be gray! I never thought to ask anybody!"

"Nonsense!" I exclaimed.

She wrung her hands.

"You won't tell me; you won't tell me! *Am I old? Is my hair gray?*" And then, at her boldness, she shrank back in confusion, blushing furiously. "Oh!" she cried, "oh, oh!"

"Your hair is quite brown," I said. "There isn't a single gray hair to be seen. And you don't look thirty."

She laughed with delight.

"Ah—but—it's not the one I know. No. It couldn't be so."

"Stranger things have happened. It would surprise him, now—to see you?"

"Oh!" she cried. "Would it surprise him, though? Would he wish to see me, d'you think? After all these years?" She drooped as a flower might from too much sunshine. "After all the mistakes!"

"It would do no great harm," I suggested.

"It might, though." She flung up her head gallantly. "It might. Sometimes it's best not to risk spoiling things. One is sure, at least, of the past. It belongs to me. It's mine."

The color still mantled her face, and she touched her cheek with a covert hand and turned away.

"Of course, you can't understand," she said. "Please excuse me—but it was all so sudden, so—so possible, for a second."

"Perhaps it's still possible," I said.

"No. It's better as it is." Then impulsively, "I'd know his voice anywhere—his voice," she mused.

For the moment I was forgotten.

"Shall I bring him to you?" I asked.

For an instant she flashed into happiness. Then an expression of hopeless, tragic composure settled upon her face.

"No," she said gently. "I will ask you not to bring him, not even to let him know that I live here. Promise me that. He won't see me, for I'll go out only at night. Because—it's foolish, I know, but I won't spoil the remembrance I already have. It won't grow old, or gray, or tired; it will always be young for me, always. It's better so." She came to me, and held out her hand. There was an ache in her blank, gray eyes. "Promise," she said. "Promise?"

And we clasped hands.

As I left her, it seemed to me that perhaps she was right, and that it was all for the best. She had her deathless memory of him; he the vivid reality of her. To reunite them might tarnish the luster of their silent bond. And their secret was the dearest thing in life to them. It seemed almost impious that I should dare dictate its future, wherein lay who could say what threatening possibilities? In the present, there was at least safety.

I talked again with Gryce that night, telling him of my visit to her, and of her plans for the coming winter. This moved him a little, and he said that he, too, would go to the city to watch over her. He spoke more freely to me now, and, since we were walking in the open and safely out of all earshot, with the natural voice and intonations of Greet the sailor, he told me of his plans, of his little investments, of the time when he would soon be master of his own vessel.

"It was all I wanted, once," he said wistfully, "but now—well, it doesn't seem anything very much."

We had come to Bellwater footbridge, and he paused to light his pipe. There was a smell of smoke from the village chimneys, and the damp fra-

grance of the woods hung in the soft air. Somewhere a whippoorwill piped, and tree toads cheeped, and underfoot the rippling water flashed back a thousand twinkling reflections of the big half-moon that swung above.

I tossed a splinter from the rail, and watched it dance off down the silver lane.

"Greet," said I, "why don't you take the big fighting chance, and go to her?"

He shook his head, snapping the burned-out match after the splinter.

"No," he said. "I—I don't dare risk it."

He was facing me. Looking past his shoulder, I thought, for an instant, that I detected a movement of something down by the opposite bank and a little above us. There was a brief silence.

"It's worth a risk, isn't it?" I asked finally.

"No," he cried, and struck the rail a sudden blow with his clenched fist. "Don't talk of such things. I tell you, once for all, it can't be. Knowing her is the only happiness I've got in life. D'ye think I'd lose the chance of that happiness by going to her and perhaps having her turn me from the door? No! Greet is dead to her, and I dare say she's far happier—"

"Be quiet!" and I caught his arm. For, suddenly, as from air, a figure had appeared at the far end of the bridge. Following my eyes, he turned, staring.

She came slowly, with one hand at her heart, as if to hold it back, and groping a little with the other, until quite near.

"I was feeding—the trout; I—I heard," she said.

He did not speak, but stood there, trembling.

"Somebody's been smoking," she said. "Funny smoke!"

And then, with a throaty moan, her brave little pretense left her, and she held out her arms and cried, "Thomas—Thomas Greet—where are you? I—can't—see—"

And as, with a great, sobbing cry, he stumbled toward her, I turned and went away.



The Way of the Fauquers



J R.B.



Tuthill

AS Judith Carhart crouched among the gray-limestone ledges at the edge of the mill race, the keen air of the Canadian May penetrated her clothing and made her shiver. All the gathered chill and purity of the winter's ice and snow, packed away so lately among the bays and recesses of the Great Lakes, was in the wind that blew upon her from the rushing, turbulent river, down which, all during April, the endless procession of ice cakes had floated. Swiftly and silently for weeks they had glided by, and not until May was ushered in had there come an end to their mad race down the river, over the falls, and out to the Atlantic. While the afterbreath of the ice remained, summer was held at bay.

Above everything, Judith hated to be cold. But in spite of the physical discomfort that she was enduring, the strain of the fastidious running through her sensuous nature responded to the chaste austerity of this northern spring. Accustomed all her life to the warm enervation of spring sunshine, and the soft balm of sea breezes on the southern New England coast, she welcomed this pure, cool-breathing May of the Lakes with an exhilarating sense of novelty and expectation.

Then, too, the scene that had brought her out-of-doors was one of unique beauty. The twilight had been invaded by the glow and flare of torches that hovered above the mill race like huge will-o'-the-wisps. Up and down they

took their course, now hanging poised for several seconds, then dipping abruptly, now steadily, slowly retreating, now bearing down upon Judith with the same steadiness, but with greater speed. As they approached, the sound of men's voices, keyed to the cautious pitch made necessary by their occupation, came to her above the wild, loud clamor of the race; and from out of the dimness, curiously grotesque and distorted in the smoke and dance of the torches, men's figures could be seen wading knee-deep in the swift, cold current.

A mysterious rustling in the dried vegetation at her side turned Judith's attention from the fish speakers, and, caught for a moment in the fitful flare of one of the torches, she saw a large fish, with panting, open mouth, and glazing eyes, writhing and flopping its agonized way back to the water. The light shone full upon its scaly, golden body, as it turned and twisted with all the terror of a hunted, wounded thing that knows that life depends upon escape. There was something warmly animal about the creature's strength and torment, a suffering hitherto unguessed by Judith. She uttered an involuntary cry of pity and alarm, and rose hastily to her feet.

Her cry was echoed by a man's laugh, so gay and carefree that it gave the impression of heartlessness rather than of mirth, and a man's hand grasped the floundering mullet and tossed it lightly to the rocks, where it

lay stunned and motionless among the pile of fish from which it had writhed. There was a quality in the action that matched the laugh. Here was the sportsman pure and simple, without pity, without sensitiveness. Judith shrank instinctively.

Then a torch was held above her as the bearer stooped to look into her face, his own chiseled features and bright eyes evident to her in the red illumination. With the same mixture of admiration and contempt might Holofernes have gazed upon that other Judith when he came out to meet her in the darkness under the glow of his silver lamps. In the moment of brilliance, the quick eyes of Judith's natural appreciation, rendered discriminating by reason of her artistic training, recognized the wild grace of the roughly coated and booted figure with the dangling, tridentlike spear, and the girdle of dripping, suffering fish that hung, open-mouthed and quivering, from the rope encircling the lithe waist.

"God, girl," he said, and his voice held the same admiration and contempt that had looked from his eyes, "if I had the time, I'd kiss you!"

And, laughing again his careless laugh, he leaped lightly from the rocks to the beach and tramped toward the road that lay along the river, his torch of tamarack bark streaking the night with fire and smoke.

Judith, crouching among the stones, watching the fish speaker cut the darkness with his trail of splendor, was conscious that her heart was beating with an uncomfortable acceleration, but felt neither offense nor alarm. In spite of the contemptuous admiration that had shone in the bright eyes and vibrated in the clear voice, there had been nothing brutal or insulting in the man's bearing. Rather had he approached her like a spirit of the river and the torch-illuminated night—a creature in harmony with her mood, mysterious, primordial—a being from some primitive land where laws were unmade, except as nature made them, where conventionalities were unknown, where man spoke to woman secure in the knowledge that

his strength mastered her weakness, had he time for mastery.

She smiled to herself with a whimsical ruefulness, remembering his excuse for an omission that should have left her grateful. Putting her ungloved hand up to her face to push a wind-blown lock of hair into place, she found that her cheeks were burning, although only a moment before she had been shivering and shrinking with the dampness and chill. Then, as the darkness closed in around the vanishing flare of the tamarack torch, she relinquished her rock retreat.

Filled with a wicked exhilaration at the thought of how the recounting of her adventure would shock Anne, she laughed aloud as she picked her way over the seamed limestone of the beach in gleeful anticipation, the wild strain in her tingling responsively to the thought of the man's face that had bent so near hers, to the eternal challenge that had burned in his bright eyes and trilled in his gay laugh. When she had opened the back door of Miss Barton's cottage noiselessly, and had gained her room through the dimly lighted hall, she found herself confronted by Anne's accusing eyes, which regarded her disapprovingly from under masses of brown hair as Anne brushed and braided for the night.

"No matter how you scold," warned Judith, "anything that happens now will be an anticlimax!"

Still smiling with the memory of the little episode under the torchlight, the fish speaker crossed the road, walked a few paces down the new cement sidewalk—pride of the village!—struck across a vacant lot, and entered the gate of a large wooden house, unlighted and gloomy. In the darkness, the full dilapidation of its faded paint and dirty windowpanes was not apparent, but its ugly Queen Anne outlines, gawky between joints like a man on stilts, silhouetted their dark proportions against the paler sky. He threw his fish upon the grass outside the kitchen door, and tried the latch.

"Locked, of course!" Amusement

mingled with his irritation. "Somebody'll steal Uncle Louis some of these days—I don't think!"

Then he rapped briskly.

"That you, Julien?" came in quavering tones. "I just locked the door, you see, thinking perhaps—"

"Oh, I know, uncle; don't apologize. Thinking, perhaps, some one would come and murder you while I was gone," interrupted Julien. He stepped into the kitchen and turned to look down at the short, bent figure of his uncle. "There's a lot of fish out there on the grass. You might get busy and clean some up for breakfast. I haven't got time."

A cunning, senile grin appeared upon the lips of the little man. He rubbed his trembling hands together with an ill-concealed curiosity as he looked up into the face of his tall nephew. He winked knowingly.

"Over the river, eh?"

Julien's face was impassive. The enterprises in which he worked were too desperate for idle confidences. He chose, instead, to confess to the less hazardous occasion.

"Over the river?" he returned vaguely. "Down to see Rose, you mean."

The old man's smile became maudlin in its extreme appreciation.

"Oh, Rose—yes, indeed, Rose! Rose is a fine young woman, Julien, a *very* fine young woman. Bit of a temper—bit of a temper—oh, perhaps, perhaps! But it goes with that red hair she's got. Lord, it's a hing to see! 'Tain't so much red, after all, not what people mean when they say red. Hang me, if I didn't see her standing on the dock in the sun the other day when the boat was leaving, and her hair was the color of the light that used to come streaming in through the dress of Our Lady in the window in the chapel when I was a boy. Red-purple it was, Julien boy, that dress of Our Lady in the chapel, and red-purple was Rose's hair that day in the sun. Stood in the stern of the ferry and watched it flaming out half cross the river, that hair of Rose's."

"Let Rose alone," Julien advised, with an easy toleration. "Rose is all right."

The old man wagged his head briskly.

"Oh, yes, all right, all right, indeed! Rose is a fine young woman. And they say, Julien, that you've cut out all the rest of them now—Gregson, the customs officer, and all. Oh, you lucky young dog, you lucky young dog."

Julien laughed scornfully. This tottering old relative of his, with his coward heart perennially soft to feminine charm, sometimes filled him with a great disgust.

"Get busy with the fish, uncle," he said, and was gone.

Two missions were Julien Fouquet's that night, missions that have called to natures like his from the beginning of time—love and adventure. Not that he loved Rose. Julien himself would have been the first to laugh contemptuously at such an idea. But the light feeling that he had for her was the inevitable manifestation of the man's superb animal organism which thrilled and responded to the message of the spring. As for adventure—to row across that eddying, frantic current in the uncertain light of the pale stars and the cloud-reflected brightness of the big, sprawling city across on the American shore were surely adventure enough, even though the discovered object of that crossing were not a thing to land a man in Kingston Prison for a half score of years.

He opened his lungs gratefully to the fresh, sweet river air as he swung down the main street of the straggling little town. The electric lights on the opposite shore, the mellow glory of the stars, the never-silent voice of the current, were all part of a picture that he knew by heart. Night and the river were his, the two mighty forces that he had made his slaves.

He greeted the few people that he met with a curt "good night" after the Canadian fashion, and, crossing to a narrow footpath that led directly along the beach, climbed the rough steps of a little house around whose sturdy spiles the river lapped and hissed in

foamy eddies. Within the shelter of the spiling, a small boat was tied.

Without knocking, he opened the door, and a girl, who had apparently been sitting doing nothing, rose to meet him without demonstration, but with such a glory of joy sweeping over her small features, that a more modest man than Julien Fouquet could not have mistaken the meaning of her lack of occupation. She had been sitting counting the moments until his coming by the beatings of her heart.

He put his arm around her lightly.

"Hello, Rose. Everything all right? All alone, and the oars in the boat?"

She nodded.

"All alone. Father and Jim have gone to a blow-out at Ik Smith's road house. They won't be back till nearly morning."

Julien's blue eyes darkened and deepened until they appeared black.

"I'll hurry," he said, and turned toward the door.

But Rose sprang to him and laid her arms about him.

"Don't go, Julien; don't go!" There was wild anxiety in her cry. "Somehow, I'm afraid."

Julien swept her hair back from her small face with a touch that made her dizzy with happiness. He mocked her laughingly.

"Afraid? Afraid of what?"

"Oh, I don't know—the river, the customs officers, everything! You're so reckless, Julien. They suspect—I know they do. And Gregson hates you for getting what he wanted. Some night they'll catch you with the goods, and then—it's Kingston Prison, Julien!"

Julien Fouquet's face grew stern.

"I know; for ten years. I'd drown myself first! But they won't catch me, Rose. No one knows the river as I do. It won't go back on me." He was superstitiously confident of his fate. Three long, harsh whistles broke through the usual night sounds. "The boat's on her last trip across. Now's my time. Good-by."

Then, as she clung to him, protesting, he bent his head and kissed her throat, laughing.

"Why, Rose, I didn't know you had a yellow streak!"

The girl loosed her hold.

"I haven't, except for you. If anything happens to take you from me now, I'll die!"

Still Julien laughed—the laugh gay with insensibility.

"You've loved men before me, Rose, and you'll love men after. The birds mate every spring, so what's the use in quarreling with nature?"

Notwithstanding his exploits of the night before, the next morning found Julien stirring betimes. There was nothing of the enervating dissipation of cities about the lawless life of this straight, vivid-eyed youth. Rather did he take his pleasures like some blithe god, refreshed, not wearied. As he sat at the rough kitchen table, hungrily partaking of fried fish and the well-brewed Ceylon tea that, in Canada, is so cheap a beverage, he presented a startling contrast to the shabby, uncleanly little man who stood opposite him, rubbing his trembling old hands with a fumbling nervousness.

Julien's healthy, transparent skin shone and glowed with his ice-cold morning ablutions. His burnished hair was damp and curling from a plunge into a frigid basin of river water. His rough, blue-flannel shirt, open at the throat, showed a chest of marble smoothness and whiteness, and his sleeves, rolled up above his elbows, displayed the firm muscles of his forearms. His hands, strong, but small for one of his length of limb and breadth of shoulder, held his heavy cup of coarse porcelain with an absolute steadiness. As he set down the cup and took up his knife and fork, a peculiar grace and delicacy were noticeable in his manipulation of the utensils—the strong, true dexterity of touch that we are wont to associate with the clever surgeon.

The old man's shifty brown eyes—wicked little eyes, wherein, in spite of the wickedness, there lay a dim gleam of pathos, the pathos of futile age unloved, unhonored, and unsatisfied—studied the indifferent face of his

nephew with a mixture of dislike and envy. He knew that Julien despised him, and the innate vanity that was in him took offense. But he was honestly convinced that there was not a woman in the town, young or old, that Julien could not have for the asking, and for that he envied him with all his greedy, unwholesome soul.

Seeing that Julien was in no haste to break the silence, old Louis Fouquet spoke at last in his mumbling, loose-lipped fashion.

"Miss Henrietta Barton's got some new boarders," he affirmed knowingly.

"Humph!" was his nephew's indifferent response.

Undaunted by Julien's lack of interest, old Louis waxed garrulous.

"Sure, Julien, sure! Two girls, Julien, two mighty good-looking girls. One of them's a peach, Julien, what you might call a peach. And the other's all right, too. Not so pretty as the other—no, no, not near so pretty, but all right just the same. Oh, yes, all right. Seem to be artists from the city or something. Anyway, I saw the peach go by this morning with a tin box, and a fold-up easel, and a camp stool tied together. Lord, Julien, she stepped out like a queen, her head was carried so high and proud! I was standing close by the pickets when she went by me. Lord, boy, there was a look about her that I ain't ever seen in these parts, not since your mother's day. Her hair was thick as Rose's, but blue-black like the wing of a grackle, and she gave me a look with her eyes—pure blue they were, Julien, lighter than yours, and clear as the river over the limestone—she gave me a look that was like a smile. Aye, boy, a rare look it was, as if all the world was her friend, and she the friend of all the world. Rare look it was—a rare, friendly look!"

He grinned senilely, rubbing his hands and chuckling.

"Love at first sight, uncle. You know you're a winner with the ladies."

The contempt in Julien's voice was stinging, and brought a slow flush to the old man's flabby cheeks.

He swallowed his resentment, how-

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ever, too cowardly by nature to offend the being by grace of whose scornful generosity he was living out the remnant of his ignoble years, and went shuffling about the kitchen attending to the womanish duties of dishwashing and clearing away the remains of the breakfast, while his nephew pushed his chair away from the table, lighted a pipe, and smoked meditatively.

The kitchen sink was set underneath a window that was liberally splashed with dried soapsuds and greasy water, and as he handled the doubtful-looking dishcloth and towel, old Louis Fouquet ceased not to bend and peer through the unwashed panes. Julien, watching him with that eternal scorn and contempt, presently made his uncle jump with the sudden question:

"Well, what's so interesting, winner?"

The old man turned from the dishpan, and, holding a dripping cup in his trembling hand, faced Julien, whispering confidentially:

"She's there, Julien; she's there! I can see her. She's set up her easel down on the rocks and she's painting. Her back's toward me, and she's got her hat off, and the sun's shining on her hair." He turned again to the window and peered out. In all his movements there was a stealthy caution that was not good to see. "Lord, boy, how it shines—those big braids wound round her head—how it shines!"

Julien laughed, smoked his pipe slowly to the end, knocked the ashes out upon the kitchen floor, and went out upon the rocks.

In the morning sunlight, the little village flashed like a jewel, nay, like a whole casket of jewels; everywhere was dazzle, everywhere glitter, everywhere a vivid intensity of color that would have seemed exaggerated if reproduced on canvas. Set as the town was almost at the junction of the lake and the river, whichever way one looked there stretched before the vision a world of flashing, hurrying waters; the sound of their tumultuous descent filled the ears. Gazing lakeward on a morning like this, even Julien's strong eyes

were sometimes dazzled by the sun-smitten rapids. From the clear-blue expanse of water to the south, in plume-like waves whereof every crest was spangled with diamonds and in gurgling backwaters of foam-flecked emerald, down they raced, booted among the stones and rocks in the limpid shallows, and finally merged themselves in the transparent green of the river, smooth to the uninitiated gaze, but treacherous, in its swift flight, with sucking whirlpools and cross currents.

Along this flashing water front, the village took its way like a lazy vagabond following the course of the aquamarine water, constantly fronting it in a fascinated inability to break away and climb the slopes that led back into the country. So it straggled and strolled mile after mile, south to the lake and north to the international bridge—a shabby, down-at-the-heels, unkempt little hamlet, fresh with nature's purity of sunshine and ozone, reeking with the vileness of man, permeated with license and lawlessness, but defying with the vigor of its beauty the possibility of being wholly defiled.

Though there is not a crime of which Ferrytown had not been guilty, no dishonesty or meanness to which most of its inhabitants had not stooped, no law that they had hesitated to break for any scruple more conscientious than the probability of discovery and punishment; though second-class prize fighters, unspeakable followers of the race track, smugglers, and loose characters, male and female, found here a congenial environment, to those who saw it for the first time, unprejudiced and pure of heart, it spoke eternally of the better things for which it might have stood—of liberty, not license—of peace and quiet—of the purity of clear waters and unclouded skies—of romance and of poetry.

And, indeed, there was a leaven in the dough of wickedness, albeit of a not-too-active yeastiness, that looked aghast upon the general pollution with a Pharisaical aloofness—a sprinkling of people like Miss Henrietta Barton, all of undoubted worth, probity, and

unblemished record, who went to church on Sunday, and, undefiled by the pitchiness of their neighbors, lived their orderly lives through the week; while the said neighbors, wholly impervious to the excellent example that they might have followed, went their lawless way unabashed and brazen.

To Judith, painting busily in the sunshine, the complexities of the little Canadian villages were as yet unknown. To her it was Wonderland, a country of intoxicating color, a new, untried field of work and adventure. She smiled reminiscently. Adventure! Had she not had one already?

Turning her head, she glanced down the mill race to where it overtook the river and tumbled pell-mell into the translucent green water. Standing on the narrow strip of beach, shading his eyes with his hand, a man was regarding her with frank curiosity. Something in the lithe, wild grace of his pose and figure, in his unabashed interest, suggested to Judith the apparition that had bent above her out of the darkness and the red torch gleams the night before. With a mingling of delight and trepidation, she turned again to her painting. Then she heard the crunching of loose rock and the tread of firm footsteps.

"Good morning," said Julien Fouquet. Judith looked up from her easel.

"I don't know which he reminded me of most," she had declared to Anne the night before, "a viking or a merman; but, anyway, he was most awfully picturesque!"

Now, as she beheld him standing bareheaded and barethroated in the brilliant sunshine—lithe and graceful, with the narrow-hipped, broad-shouldered Indian straightness that was his by inheritance—it seemed to her that the sun god, Balder, beloved of all men for his brightness, must have bared just such bronze-gold curls to the Norse sky, must have carried his young head in some such strong, gay fashion. It was as impossible for Judith not to smile upon this radiant man creature as it would have been for her to frown upon the sunshine and the spring.

When Louis Fouquet said that Judith's eyes held an expression that seemed to say that she was the friend of all the world, he told the truth. Her eyes were the index of her attitude. Friendship, sympathy, cheerful charity embracing every human being within her ken, bubbled and brimmed in her heart until her eyes were unable to hold the secret, and compassed even old Louis Fouquet with their shafts of kindness. Being innocent of all dishonor, she was unable to credit it to others.

Judith was twenty-two, and had read all the books permissible to young girls, and a great many that were not. So instructed, she considered herself wise beyond her experiences, which proves her simplicity, for the wise know that the price of wisdom is experience—first-hand, face-to-face, lived-to-the-utmost experience; with no other coin can wisdom be bought. Judith's training recognized that there was sin in the world, that there was brutality, that there was dishonesty, but not one of these things had so far touched her life. She regarded them as one might some pestilential country of which one has read, but which one will never be called upon to visit.

That there was an underworld she knew, and she was conscious of a curiosity concerning it that she frankly thrust aside as unworthy, but to which she as frankly confessed. She wished to drink life's wine of wonder to the dregs, but felt assured that the cup presented to her was filled with a liquor that sparkled uncontaminated by poison. And so, in the smile that flashed so readily, there was a challenge—a reckless flinging to any stranger of a rare quality of good-fellowship, a casting down of a pearl of which she herself did not know the value, even as she failed at times to identify the one to whom she threw it as belonging to the biblical family whose chief joy it is to rend just such priceless gems. That Julien, steeped since his birth in the pitchy traditions of Ferrytown, recognized a puzzling difference between Judith's instant surrender and the easy

yielding of others of her sex, is to his credit. He accepted her innate purity as naturally as he accepted the uncontaminated river air and the sunshine.

Though he accepted it, he gave it no name, but the inborn cleanliness that was in him went out to meet it just as his lungs expanded without volition to the unpolluted air, drinking it in eagerly, quenching a thirst that he had not known existed for things lovely and of good repute. The look that he bent upon Judith was almost wistful. It darkened the brilliant sapphire eyes and curved the finely cut mouth into delicacies of line unnoticed in its usual expression of self-controlled resolution. Then the harsh sophistication that his life had taught him laid hold of him, the tenderness vanished almost before it had existed, and he regarded Judith with that mixture of admiration and contempt that made up the sum of his feeling for any pretty girl.

Womanlike, noting the admiration, she preferred to ignore the contempt. Besides, what to her, superior with the unquestioned excellence of educated, cultured, well-bred New England, was the contempt of this sun-bright savage? He was a product of the country that made his environment, brilliant with its intoxication of color, but undoubtedly crude with its uncultivated rawness. Much as she might have encouraged the advances of some beautiful animal but half inclined toward friendliness, she addressed him with a blithe indifference.

"Isn't it a glorious morning?"

He ignored the commonplace.

"You'd better keep away from the mill race at night," he declared, his unanalyzed sense of her difference from other girls that he had known making him hasten to voice a warning that he would have omitted with those others. In his voice there was a vibrant softness that was like music, and his accent had the clear-cut, Canadian quality that is not English, but that, to American ears, hints pleasantly of the mother country.

In spite of her vaunted independence, Judith felt convicted of an indiscretion,

and so became more determined in her resolve not to admit it.

She swept her canvas with a bold dash of cobalt.

"Why?"

He laughed disdainfully.

"You'll find out if you keep on going," was his frank explanation.

Judith flushed. There was no romantic glamour in this pagan being's recognition of the probability of unpleasant adventures awaiting her. He was as irritatingly matter-of-fact as Puritan Anne. Her untamed rashness was in her answer.

"I'll have to find out, then, for when the spirit moves me I shall keep on going. I'm not afraid, and I've got to feel free. I can't paint unless I do. It's like an unending gray day with no color when people keep telling you it's not safe to do this, and not proper to do that. You'd understand what I mean if you had been brought up by a crowd of uncles and aunts who were shocked at everything you wanted to do most. It takes all the sunshine out of living. I've got to have color in my life just as I've got to have color in my painting."

"Color! You'll get color enough over here all right. Only, unless you're stuck on the lurid, you may not like it after you get it."

Judith smiled. This savage was not so crude, after all. Evidently he had been to school. Unexplainedly glad to find him less impossible than she had thought, she became playful.

"No, I'm not particularly 'stuck on the lurid,' as you put it, but that's not what I've found over here so far—with the exception, perhaps, of the lurid glare of your torch," she added, for the first time openly reminiscent of their former meeting.

His comprehension leaped to meet hers.

"That's the sort of thing I meant. They'll tell you I'm as rough as they make them, but there are some rougher still, *believe me*," said Julien Fouquet.

Rough—that word hardly described him, Judith thought. Taking inventory of his lithe, muscular straightness, his

fair skin, his features refined and chiseled to the delicacy that we associate with the cunningly wrought cameo, Judith's candid eyes shot into his their beams of invincible friendliness, touched with the artist's appreciation of his masculine beauty.

"Indeed, I *do* believe you!"

And in her absolute sincerity his slang was transformed.

Either he did not comprehend her implied compliment, or comprehending, he did not value it. There was no hint of gratified vanity in his unsmiling face.

"Let's see what you're painting."

He made the demand with the simplicity of one who recked little of the ways of the artist, his jealous guarding of his uncompleted vision from profane eyes.

Only a favored few were allowed to look at Judith's work—the right to "turn her canvases," as she expressed it, was reserved for a discriminating half dozen of her friends, and was a mark of her utter trust in their sympathy and comprehension. Yet, at the careless demand of this half-civilized male, she drew away from her easel that he might the better examine her sketch.

He glanced down upon its spirited boldness with a start of surprise. She had grasped it all—the intense dazzle of sunshine on rushing, green-blue waters; the polished gold of the bare, spring-touched branches of the willows on the little island across the race; the gradual melting of the brilliant sky into the smoke cloud always hovering over the American shore.

Then he laughed.

"You've made those willows fifty feet high!"

Judith bit her lip angrily. Drawing was her weak point, and she hated to be told of her defects. But she conceived a new opinion of the intellect of the man who had so immediately found the flaw in her bewildering gift of color.

"The island is forty feet long," he explained practically, "and if you cut down one of those trees, it would more than reach from end to end."

Judith's swift glance leaped across the race with a defiant keenness. Then she caught up a paint-smeared cloth and poured upon it part of her bottle of turpentine.

"Yes," she said humbly, "I see. They're all wrong!"

With a strenuous deliberation, she scrubbed her canvas back to its original grayness.

Julien watched her with an understanding approbation. This girl evidently did not stop to quibble or compromise. She sacrificed all that was admirable in her sketch with the same firmness with which she destroyed all that was faulty. It existed for her as an entirety, not to be separated into component parts.

"Things have got to be perfect—perfect—else I don't want them!"

And as he heard her passionate explanation as the last bit of color disappeared, in Julien Fouquet's eyes the same look of approbation sparkled and burned. Then he laughed, his carefree, reckless laugh, and left her.

Judith watched him until he disappeared around a curve in the beach. Not once did he look back. And she guessed, with a mixture of admiration and resentment, that "out of sight, out of mind," was the attitude of a nature like his when it came to women.

Turning back to her canvas, she found that her inspiration was gone. Still, she labored on valiantly until a cold, gray cloud came out of the lake and dulled the brightness. In the whipping wind and chilling sunlessness, she gathered up her outfit and went slowly back to Miss Barton's.

As she turned in at the little gate overhung with flowering currant bushes, she saw her hostess, just returned from market, sitting upon the front-door steps talking to Anne. Judith threw her traps on the grass and joined the pair on the doorsteps.

"Who is that impudent youth that lives somewhere around here, and is so divinely good looking that you can't squelch him as he deserves?"

Miss Barton seemed to recognize the description instantly.

"That—why, that, of course, is Julien Fouquet!"

And suddenly she waxed voluble, a suspicious volubility that seemed to assert that even Miss Barton, disapproving and suspicious of Julien's habits and morals, discreet, too, with years, and the entailed discretion of plain features undesired of men, had yet come sufficiently under his spell to delight in talking of him.

"You're right enough about his looks. I haven't anything to say against *them*. He's about the handsomest piece of flesh and blood I ever saw. More's the pity he shouldn't amount to something! I've known him ever since he was a baby, and he's always had that same fair skin that even the winds of these parts can't seem to make any impression on, and the same rings of hair—only it's a little darker now—and those same blue eyes that look black half the time. He used to go running around among the rocks by the race when he was a little fellow, barefooted and ragged. But his face was always clean, and he looked like a little prince in disguise with that straight nose and that sweet mouth of his—and his little scratched feet, they were arched prettier than any girl's.

"He was polite, too, for a boy who hadn't anybody to teach him anything, with a smile that would win your heart. But if there was any mortal piece of mischief that a boy could get into that Julien Fouquet wasn't in—then I don't know what it was!" Miss Barton shook her head gloomily at the memory of certain dark deeds perpetrated with her pet cat for a victim. "He was just a little devil, that's what he was, when he was a child," she ended.

Judith and Anne, seated below her on the doorsteps, listened with interest, albeit Anne's interest was the horrified attention that one gives to the conduct of a savage, while Judith's was one of eager sympathy. Miss Barton's description of the little lad, Julien, so exactly fitted in with her idea of Julien Fouquet, the man. She remembered the hand that had so ruthlessly thrust the struggling fish back to die.

"There's a streak of cruelty in him," she said thoughtfully. "There is in all wild natures."

Miss Barton nodded.

"That's the Indian blood. Way back some time or other, on his father's side, somebody married an Indian girl. At least I don't suppose he *married* her."

Miss Barton made the confession with blushing honesty.

But Judith refused to be scandalized. Was not illegitimacy prevalent among the gods? More than ever Julien appealed to her as a pagan creature for whom all civilized laws counted for naught.

Remembering his Norse aspect, she looked puzzled.

"But how on earth does he come to be so fair?"

Miss Barton became sphinxlike with the knowledge of the important secrets that she was revealing.

"His mother was a lady—a beautiful girl from the States. I remember her well. She was as fair as Jacques Fouquet was dark. Her father had a summer home up the lake shore, and was bringing her up like a nun. They say he'd had some trouble with his wife—she'd left him for a man she liked better—and it had soured him. He'd made up his mind he'd keep his daughter for himself. But if a Fouquet wants anything, he generally gets it. And she, poor girl, had never had a friend her own age, let alone a lover. So she married Jacques Fouquet. Her father disowned her, and she died when Julien was born. Then Jacques showed that, at any rate, he loved her, for he shot himself!"

Miss Barton's costume had moved Judith to laughter earlier in the day when she had observed her starting to market. For her hostess had adroitly mingled the Oriental and the Occidental, the clingingly feminine and the aggressively masculine, by appearing in a long, black cotton-crape kimono edged with flowered ribbon, and a man's straw hat. But not even the remarkable combinations of her shopping toilet could take away the tragic quality that was

upon her as she made her simple statement.

Again Judith thrilled with understanding of the tangled human characteristics and passions that had made Julien what he was. Pity, the emotion farthest from all others inspired by his radiant personality, lent its dangerous appeal to the fascination of his exceeding comeliness. Little, lonely lad, born of a great and primitive passion to a life devoid of tenderness! Would some woman make it all up to him some day? She sat silent, with her chin on her hand, and wondered.

Pleased by the evident impression that her words had made, Miss Barton resumed the thread of her discourse.

"So, bad as he is, I must say there's some excuse for him. He's twenty-four years old, and, to my knowledge, he's never done an honest day's work in his life—shoots, and hunts, and fishes, and lies around on the rocks in the sunshine. They do say his grandfather is sorry now that he was so hard on his daughter, and wants to make it up by doing what's right for Julien. But Julien won't forgive him. There's Indian in him, you see; once injured, he don't forget. As for that old Uncle Louis of his—he's the worst old reprobate that ever stepped! He owns that old ramshackle house you can just see around the bend of the road there, and he and Julien keep house together."

"But what do they live on?"

It was Anne, the matter-of-fact, who spoke.

Miss Barton's voice dropped to a portentous whisper.

"There're all kinds of queer doings in this town, miss, and Julien Fouquet's in them all, you may be sure. They do say he smuggles. Of course, we all do," she confessed apologetically, "but there's smuggling and smuggling," suggesting the possibility of a deviation from the straight and narrow path compatible with perfect respectability and a membership in the Church of England, "and Julien Fouquet's isn't any child's kind, I can tell you. There's Chinamen get over to the other side, and alcohol that gets over to this, and

nobody knows how—unless it's Julien Fouquet. Lately he's been thick as thieves with that red-haired Deane girl that lives down by the river. A pretty piece of goods she is, too!"

Miss Barton's voice took to itself the acidity of the virtuous spinster who sits in condemnation upon the weakness of another of her sex.

A wave of color suddenly swept Judith's cheeks. Up to her forehead it mounted, and burned and flamed until her black-lashed eyes smarted with tears.

"Well, why shouldn't he have his loves and adventures as well as his ancestors?" she demanded, in defiance of the smart and the blush.

Miss Barton's answer held the finality of a public censor.

"*No one* has any right to the kind of loves and adventures that Julien Fouquet likes!"

Then she gathered up her purchases and passed into the kitchen.

May was over, and June was well advanced—June, known to artists as the month unpaintable. But up here in this strange, primitive country, where every law was transgressed with a lightness unembarrassed save by the unpleasantness of public exposure, nature, too, seemed to obey no precedent. Unpaintable? Perhaps, unless a La Farge for color and a Corot for the whispering life of waving willows and shivering poplars were to come that way.

While Anne, who had never shone except for her clever terra-cotta modeling, was inspired to produce astonishingly original studies of cloud formations and smoke horizons, Judith, drunk with the beauty of it all, was in despair. Each day she set up her easel in a riot of color that made her tremble with the eagerness to begin. Each day she scrubbed out her canvas with a ruthless hand. Oh, why did all the world go prating of Italian color when here, near at hand, just across the river from the smoke and grime of the city, was this dazzling green-blue land of snowy clouds and silver foam?

All along the race the thickets of

sweet clover mingled their breath with the pure fragrance of the water. The fields, for miles back in the country, were gardens of red-and-white clover blooms sending out waves of exquisite perfume in the summer sun. And, above all, clear, unimpassioned, the note of the meadow lark cut the air with its music. Oh, this June was different from all others!

Judith refused to admit to herself that the inevitable presence of Julien Fouquet had much to do with her inability to paint. Yet when he joined her, as he invariably did, as she sat before her easel, she was conscious of a distracting element that made painting, even painting such color as she saw before her, secondary to the mere enjoyment of it all with all her finely keyed senses. Julien was so idle, so contented in his idleness, that the fume and fret of ambition seemed by comparison unsatisfactory. Undoubtedly he was wasting his superb youth, but if waste brought such absolute happiness, why strive to achieve?

Sometimes he rowed her out upon the river, threading the whirlpools and eddies with a certainty and a skill that roused her admiration. Out in the roar of the rapids and the turmoil of the current with him she felt secure. At such times, she studied his face as he sat opposite her. It was stern with purpose; his blue eyes were steady; his almost delicate mouth determined.

"How well you know the river!" she exclaimed.

"I have to," was his brief assertion. "It's my business." But his confidence ended here, and Judith, remembering Miss Barton's dark hints, did not question him.

In the evening she never saw him, and she caught herself wondering with an inexplicable earnestness how he passed the hours. With the red-haired Deane girl, probably, she meditated, assuring herself that she was wholly indifferent. She passed Rose upon the street with a disdainful aloofness, yet found herself covertly staring at her when she could do so undiscovered, and admiring against her will the girl's

strong young outlines and her remarkable hair, the crinkled, ruddy waves of which, piled and massed about her small, faintly freckled face, darkened with strange, almost purple lights in the shadow of their own abundance. This was the girl that Julien Fouquet had chosen from among the others of her class. And Rose's bronze-red hair seemed to crown her head like a shining triumph. It must be a somewhat thrilling thing to hold a nature like Julien Fouquet's.

"I can't paint, it's too glorious!" she cried one day, as he sat beside her easel, his head, with its careless, wind-blown rings of hair, a perfect profile against her empty canvas; for he was looking, not at her, but across the bubbling, surging rapids to the broad, swift green of the river.

"What makes you try?" he asked, from the depths of his dreamy content.

Judith flushed sensitively. Nobody understood. First her conventional relatives; now this lazy youth so young in some ways; so astonishingly old in others, who, when most boys were still in the schoolroom, had been meeting life—the intense, naked living that exists where men fight hand to hand, break laws, and love lightly—and who seemed to understand some things so perfectly.

"Because more than anything in the world I want to paint!"

Her flush deepened.

Julien turned toward her with his careless laugh.

"Oh, no, you don't! Women aren't made that way. That isn't really what you want most, at all."

A month ago Judith would have laughed at such an assertion. Now, for some unanalyzed reason, it made her angry.

"Oh, isn't it?" she asked, with a burst of girlish irritation. "How wise you are! What is it, then?"

"To be loved!" said Julien Fouquet.

For a second, his blue eyes caught hers and darkened. Judith turned her head away with a sudden tightening at her throat. Then she rallied to her self-esteem.

"And do you think I haven't been?"

But Julien was unimpressed.

"Not in the right way," he declared.

Judith thought of the three men, one old enough to be her father, the other two half-fledged youths who, at certain fairly exciting periods of her existence, had avowed undying love for her, and to whom she had given a kindly, amused no. Evidently there was something in Julien's confident remark. She smiled.

"Oh, really? What way do you mean?"

"My way," announced Julien.

Judith laughed, albeit somewhat nervously. Was this odd conversation a declaration? The arrogance of this half-tamed male!

"And what way is that?" she inquired, with a lofty indifference.

Julien Fouquet was too intoxicated with his local triumphs apparently. He needed to be snubbed. Then a warmth like wine ran through her. He had laid his hand upon her wrist.

"The way my father loved my mother."

An unimagined tenderness was trembling through his voice.

"Then Jacques Fouquet showed that, at any rate, he loved her, for he shot himself!"

Miss Barton's unforgotten words rang in Judith's ear. Her pity made her gentle.

"I know. It was cruel that it had to end like that."

"No, that is like our people. We love like that when we love at all. Most of us don't love, though. We are more like my great-great-grandfather, who had three sons by an Indian girl."

There was no embarrassment in Julien Fouquet's voice.

Judith felt suddenly steadied.

"I wonder which kind you are?" she inquired coolly.

He darted her a blinding look and told her slowly:

"I've always thought that I was most like my grandfather. But so did my father, too, till he saw my mother. Then he gave it all up—all his wild way of living. Just as she gave up everything for him, so he gave up everything for her. It was a fair deal.

When she gave up life itself for him, he gave his, too. Besides, to my father death was better than life without my mother. That is the way I would give up everything for you."

Up the race two girls were wading knee-deep in the plunging blue current, their hair and draperies breeze blown, a part of the eternal Corot outlines and La Farge coloring that baffled Judith. There was an inexpressible enchantment about the picture, as they swayed, and bent, and clung together before the rush of the water, that escaped neither Judith nor Julien. Against the setting of blue waves and silver-green willows, the hair of one girl shone ruddy as time-stained copper.

Judith pointed to her, self-preservation in her derisive smile.

"Would you give up the red-haired Deane girl?" she asked, and awaited his answer with a strange excitement.

In Julien's blue eyes there was no shade of surprise or disconcertion. They were as vivid as the Canadian sky overhead.

"I did," he announced simply, "long ago. If I can't have you, do you think I want anybody else?"

Then he went from her down the rocks and called lightly to Rose, who, at the sound of his voice, saw the world transfigured.

As for Judith, for the first time since she had known him, she felt herself inferior to Julien Fouquet.

All that night the stillness was haunted by the voice of the river; the air was faintly sweet with the white clover. Judith, lying on her couch by the window, could not sleep. Every sense was awake and responding to the wild-water music and the illusive fragrance. She lay with closed eyes in a delicious tranquillity through which the face of Julien Fouquet came and went with a tingling radiance that disturbed in no whit the measure of her content. He was one with the water and the fragrance. When she heard his voice on the little balcony outside her window, she thought at first that it was part of her dream.

"Judith!" he was calling softly. "Judith!"

It was the first time that he had spoken her name.

She raised herself on her elbow and looked out into the night. The half-moon was far over in the west, but in the mild glory of the light that it flung back upon the river, she saw above the railing of her balcony the face of Julien Fouquet. It was not alone the effect of the moonbeams that made it so ghastly pale. Upon his forehead there was the dark mark of blood.

"Hurry! Dress and come down on the rocks," he whispered.

Then he dropped noiselessly to the ground.

With one apprehensive glance toward Anne, who was breathing peacefully on her couch across the long, old-fashioned room, Judith rose, dressed with trembling fingers, and noiselessly as any ghost glided from the room, down the hall, passed Miss Barton's open door, and stepped out into the garden at the back of the house.

From the shadow of the lilac bushes, Julien came to meet her. He drew her back into the dimness and faced her.

"I've got to go away—get out of Canada forever. To-night they caught me with the goods—alcohol from the city. Unless I get across the river before morning, it's prison for ten years."

A vision of Julien, creature of sunshine, and fresh air, and rushing blue water, and freedom, bent, pale, wasted, shut away from them all, flashed across Judith's eyes. He saw her face grow pale in the dimness.

"They never could have caught me on the river. I was just landing. As it was, I made them fight for it. But it was one against three. I've been locked in the customhouse for two hours, damn them! But there's a boat waiting for me now at the foot of the race." His voice changed suddenly, and compassed Judith with caresses. "I came to tell you that you belong to me, girl, just as my mother did to my father."

He did not touch her, he only waited quietly there in the musical, fragrant

night for her to take the initiative, waited for her to bestow unasked the thing that he craved.

All her life suddenly swam before her, as they say it does upon the choking senses of a drowning man—the easy, carefree past, the hard, uncertain future. To be loved in his way, the way unknown to all her conventional relatives, and only dimly guessed by her—the mad, passionate way of those Fouquets who loved at all—he was right; it was what she wanted most. And she made her choice after the manner of women.

"Let me go with you. I understand now how your mother loved your father."

He laughed softly, a laugh of masculine triumph.

"I'm going to chuck it all. I've never forgiven my mother's people for what they did to her. I've tied up with Uncle Louis because he, at least, never hurt her. But for you I'll do it. There's a lawyer over in the States who's been writing to me for three years—he's even been over here to see if I wouldn't go to my grandfather—he says he wants to help me be anything I wish."

"I've laughed at him, and I've told him that I was what I wanted to be, anyway, and no thanks to my grandfather, either. But my wife must have the things that will make her happy. I'm not all savage—I've got my mother in me, too. And I love you, I tell you, as my father did her. You are like my mother. Her people are yours, and so I shall take them for mine, too. You believe me, don't you? You believe that I will make good? You believe that if I did not know I could—I would not take you?"

In the pale river light, his face glimmered above hers with a set determination; its delicacy was like that wrought perfection that makes up the strands of the steel-strong cable. He invited her on no perilous adventure. He had thought out all the price of her going. He was finer far than her judgment of him. And owning her mistake, once more Judith felt herself inferior. But there was no humiliation in her attitude.

She gloried in his supremacy as a woman longs to when she loves a man.

"Nothing matters. I should have gone with you, anyway. I love you."

He grew stern.

"Things *do* matter. My mother loved my father, but since I've known you, I've thought, time and time again, how lucky it was that she died. His world wasn't hers. By and by it *would* have mattered. God! Think of a man like Louis Fouquet coming near you as he came near my mother!"

The anger and disgust that were upon him made him tremble. Then his voice took to itself a sudden tenderness that seemed to infold Judith in safe, strong arms.

"Oh, girl, you will not be sorry for what you are doing for me to-night! I shall be very good to my mate!"

He guided her carefully over the sharp, uneven rocks to the foot of the race. In a tiny harbor between two boulders, a boat was fastened. Beside it stood a girl.

"Who is that?" Judith clung to him in alarm.

Julien laughed lightly.

"Don't be afraid! It's only Rose. She helped me get away."

"Rose!" Quick jealousy shot through Judith. While she had been lying lazy and content, this red-haired girl of the docks had been working. "How could she?"

His explanation was brief.

"She saw them take me. Gregson, the customs officer, is mad about her. Up to now, she would not look at him. It wasn't hard for her to bribe him. They've given me till morning to get away."

Judith stared at him. Out of her own love, she comprehended Rose's sacrifice. Was it possible that he did not understand—could not conceive the supreme love that made the girl's act beautiful? Oh, in spite of everything, he was still a savage, selfish, cruel, just as she had seen him that first night of all!

He placed her in the boat and turned to the girl who waited there so silently.

"Good-by, Rose. If you see Uncle Louis, tell him there's money enough

in the old cigar box to keep him till I can send him some more."

There was a pitiful expectancy in the small face that was raised to his, and Julien, answering its dumb desire, stooped and gave her a careless kiss.

"So long! You've been a good pal, girl!"

She received the caress mutely, with clenched hands and closed eyes.

Julien stepped into the boat and seated himself opposite Judith. Taking up the oars, he swung out with the current into the river.

For a long time Rose sat dry-eyed upon the shore, straining her ears to catch the sound of the oars above the roar of the current. When she could no longer hear the strokes, two burning tears gathered in her eyes and scorched her cheeks.

"Oh, God!" she whispered to her bursting heart, and a desperate realization of what the last few hours had

meant brought her to her feet and down to the edge of the water. There she stood, drooping and wind-whipped, striving to pierce the darkness with her tear-dimmed eyes.

"He's gone—he won't come back again, ever!"

The whole mad river seemed laughing at her despair. Then a pride, fierce and honest as her love had been, dried her tears and straightened her slight, strong figure. She stood like a young soldier who has won his sword.

"I've done it. It was me that saved him. It wasn't her—it was me!"

But Judith, carried safely over the dark, swift water by Julien's strong, sure strokes, was weeping passionately.

"Oh, how could you be so cruel? How could you? Oh, poor Rose! Oh, that poor, poor girl!"

Julien Fouquet made no explanation. He leaned toward her and kissed her on the mouth.

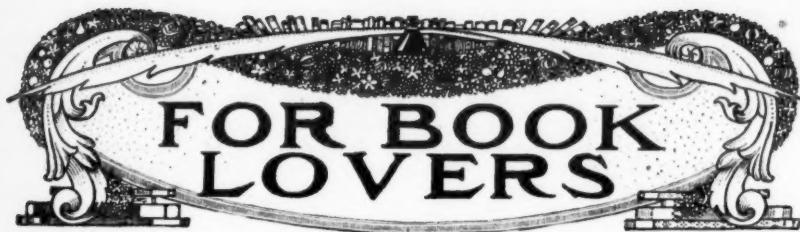


SPRING IN AUTUMN

WEST WIND, rich with flower dust,
 Leafy must,
 Rainbow rust,
 Cunningly you've kept in trust
 Spring's own gold and blue.
 Now Saint Martin's Summer comes,
 With the acorns' gusty thrums
 On the dead leaves' muffled drums,
 She comes back with you.

Since you cozened her away
 With the May—
 Heartless fay!
 We've been lonely many a day
 For our Spring Ladie.
 Now that autumn's in the air.
 Lo, you bring her back more fair!
 So we'll leave her in your care—
 West Wind, keep her tenderly!

ALLAN UPDEGRAFF.



FOR BOOK LOVERS

JOHN FOX'S new book, "The Heart of the Hills," published by Charles Scribner's Sons, is another Kentucky story; and, it must be said, it is one that differs in no essential particular from the author's previous tales, unless the fact that Mr. Fox has woven into the plot the murder of Governor Goebel, may be considered sufficient to make it a new story.

The familiar complications growing out of the unique mountain custom of maintaining domestic warfare, which seem inseparable from any attempt to write of the Kentucky or Tennessee mountains, are offered here again, and form the backbone of the plot.

There is the youth who, under the influence of encroaching civilization, begins to revolt at the conditions into which he was born, and there is the girl whose life those conditions threaten to wreck. And the dénouement is the familiar one—Jason Hawn succeeds in freeing himself from the deadening circumstances, leaves the mountains, achieves an education, and becomes a power for good in the world; Mavis Hawn is also emancipated, and develops into a young woman who, in the great democracy, may practically choose her own environment.

While it may be conceded that Mr. Fox may legitimately confine himself to a single theme—so long, at least, as his audience continues to demand it—we may be still pardoned for a slight sense of dissatisfaction that an author of his experience and training should be betrayed into the excess of sentiment

that appears here and there in "The Heart of the Hills."



Several months ago, we took occasion, in these pages, to refer to the current agitation on the subject of the white slave and the use to which it had been put by certain writers of fiction as an excuse for stories that otherwise might never have seen the light of day. And we expressed the opinion that the publication of such stories was to be welcomed for the reason that the more we had, the sooner this special form of insanity would pass.

Since that was written, another book of this type has appeared, under the title of "Hagar Revelly," written by Daniel Carson Goodman, and published by Mitchell Kennerley.

If, as some well-intentioned people assert, the social and physical welfare of the people depends, in large measure, upon the frank and public discussion of sex problems, it seems to be growing more evident that we must obtain such welfare very largely at the expense of our morals, so long, at least, as books like "Hagar Revelly" are allowed to be published.

The condemnation of the practice of putting into fiction the details of rape and seduction cannot be met by charges of prudery, for fiction is not the place for details of that kind. If the campaign against the white-slave trade needs publicity, the newspapers and sociological journals can supply it. But that campaign and fiction mutually de-

grade each other when there is an attempt to unite them.

And in addition to this, art is outraged by this sort of thing because it is based so largely on false pretense.



"The Spirit of American Literature," by John Albert Macy, published by Doubleday, Page & Co., is one of the few, the very few, books of its class, published in recent years, that is worth reading.

Most of the writing that passes for literary criticism or literary appreciation in these days is pervaded with the self-consciousness of the writers to such an extent that it is lacking either in interest or instruction.

The great charm of Mr. Macy's volume is its spontaneity; he has ideas of his own, and he does not hesitate to express them. And he does it with a vigor and an originality that make delightful reading, leaving the reader free to enjoy the substance of what he says, without having his attention diverted by the self-complacency of contemporary culture—or of what passes for culture.

Mr. Macy has undertaken, as he tells us, to say something "about most, if not quite all, of the emergent figures in American literature," and we think that his selection of "emergent figures" is one that will not stir much opposition, even if some of us feel that our preferences or prejudices have not been treated with the consideration due them. But he disarms such protests as we may be tempted to make by admitting quite frankly, at the outset, that his own individual preference accounts for the appearance in the book of William James and Henry James, and the omission of Bryant, Mrs. Stowe, and Bret Harte.

His chapter on Emerson, to refer specifically to only one, is, in our opinion, the nearest approach to a correct estimate of the sage of Concord that has appeared; but even Mr. Macy, with all his enlightenment, speaks of him as a minor poet!

Jack London's latest story, "The Abysmal Brute," published by the Century Company, is something of a disappointment, because it is a rather labored and unconvincing effort to throw a halo of romance about the person of a prize fighter.

Mr. London's art is not equal to a task of this kind; it requires a delicacy of touch and an understanding of the shades of psychological phenomena of which he has never shown any evidence, to make such a story as this plausible.

If we are to be made to believe that young Pat Glendon is really the man of fine feelings and cultured tastes that Mr. London tells us he is, we must be convinced of it by a very subtle development of his character. If he is really as innocent and unsophisticated as he is supposed to be, evidence, other than his creator's assertion, ought to be offered. We can accept the statement that he is a marvel of masculine strength and beauty, but we have our own doubts as to whether those advantages, in themselves, would avail a prize fighter in attracting the sentimental regard of Maud Sangster, "a match in ten thousand."

But, of course, a woman is necessary for a romance, especially a prize fighter's romance.

The difficulty with Mr. London's idea of romance, however, is that it involves the forcible union of ingredients that are, so to speak, chemically repulsive. But this exercise of main force, regardless of the laws of psychology, is characteristic of most of our red-blood fiction.



A story of South Africa that makes good summer reading, is F. E. Mills-Young's novel, "Myles Calthorpe," published by the John Lane Company.

It is not, as might be inferred from the statement that it is a South African story, either an adventure tale or a narrative of life among the Boers. Its characters are all English, and its plot is romantic.

There is, as it seems to us, an unnecessary vagueness about the past of young Myles Calthorpe that piques the curiosity of the reader, and gives him a certain sense of dissatisfaction. In spite of the fact that Myles seems to be what is known as a "gentleman"—that is to say, a man equipped with the qualities that fit him for any kind of social life—we know nothing about his antecedents. He seems to be a man without ties or associations of any sort, and yet he is not a "soldier of fortune." He is merely a very unlucky young chap, who has a faculty for getting into trouble through no fault of his own.

Nevertheless, there is an attractiveness in his personality, and it is not at all strange, considering the circumstances, that Joan Farrant should fall in love with him.

The book is extremely well written, the story and the characters are developed with a good deal of skill, and all of the incidentals of the plot are logically arranged.

Important New Books

"The Lady and the Pirate," Emerson Hough; Bobbs-Merrill Co.

"The Open Window," E. Temple Thurston; D. Appleton & Co.

"A Fool and His Money," George Barr McCutcheon; Dodd, Mead & Co.

"Spider's Web," Reginald Wright Kauffman; Moffat, Yard & Co.

"The Whistling Man," Maximilian Foster; D. Appleton & Co.

"Dark Hollow," Anna Katharine Green; Dodd, Mead & Co.

"The Plain Man and His Wife," Arnold Bennett; George H. Doran Co.

"The Way of Ambition," Robert Hichens; F. A. Stokes Co.

"The Friendly Enemy," T. P. Cameron Wilson; G. P. Putnam's Sons.

"Dying Fires," Allan Monkhouse; George H. Doran Co.

"Lanagan, Amateur Detective," Edward H. Hurlburt; Sturgis & Walton Co.

"Degarmo's Wife," David Graham Phillips; D. Appleton & Co.

"Bell and Wing," Frederick F. Ayer; G. P. Putnam's Sons.

"Half Lengths," George W. E. Russell; Duffield & Co.

"The Happy Family," Frank Swinnerton; George H. Doran Co.



THE LILY

LILY in a stagnant pond,
What can keep you spotless still,
When each slimy vagabond
May assail you, and at will?

In a scum-infested lake,
Mortals tremble to invade,
How can you all fear forsake—
Why are you so undismayed?

Trothed to Heaven, far beyond,
Through life's breadth, and depth, and length,
Lily in a stagnant pond,
You are virtue—you are strength.

RALPH M. THOMSON.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

ONE often comes upon the statement in the writings of twenty-year-old cynics that "man is naturally polygamous." Have you read Eleanor Hoyt Brainerd's novelette in this number? Well, take Pat. It has occurred to us, since meeting this delightful example, that perhaps the typical American girl is so many sided, so changeable in her moods, so contradictory in her character that a man, to appreciate her thoroughly in all her many changes, *must* be naturally polygamous. She certainly possesses infinitely more variety than all four of the simpler-natured wives of any Turk. Her husband, in order to love her completely, *must* be polygamous; and she, in order completely to possess that polygamous husband, *must* be full of duplicity, quadruplicity, or even, in extreme cases, sextuplicity.

Incidentally, the Turk willingly provides his four wives with gowns and jewels. Should an American husband complain, then, when expected to provide all four, or six, or eight varying moods of his better half with— But we must say nothing that might alienate the married portion of our male circulation.



THAT AINSLEE'S has secured several stories by Leonard Merrick will be of particular interest to you, as it was in this magazine that American readers were introduced to this author's work.

Arthur Bartlett Maurice, recording his "Impressions of Leonard Merrick," in *The Bookman*, writes:

"Whatever may be to-day the dimensions of Leonard Merrick's American following, it is a following which he owes neither to exploitation nor to intimidation. As yet his books have had no extensive *réclame*, nor has anything happened to circulate widely the impression that not to have read them means to be out of touch with a literary movement of the hour. He is not even a new writer. For some years his stories

have been accessible in England, where they have had the highest appreciation from certain critics, and a comparatively limited circle of readers. They seem to have found their way into this country, not from England direct, but by the way of the Continent. A traveling American discovers one of them in a Tauchnitz edition and tells other Americans of his find. Of course there have been occasional critical articles which have had their effect. Mr. Howells, for example, wrote one a few years ago which left no doubt of his admiration. But in the main Mr. Merrick owes his growing American popularity to personal indorsement. It may be that four or five men are sitting about a table in a club, or in the smoking room of a transatlantic liner, or as many women lounging in easy-chairs on a hotel veranda. The scene is quite immaterial. Some one will ask the question: 'Have you read Leonard Merrick?' If this brings any response at all it will be instantaneous. 'And then you remember "Conrad in Quest of His Youth" and that scene in "The Position of Peggy"—and what delicious irony there is in "The Bishop's Comedy"—and do you recall the day that Tricotin spent in London?'—and then an earnest if more or less awkward attempt to outline the plot of this particular tale or that for the listener's benefit."

It may be said here that Merrick's first story in AINSLEE'S, "A Commotion in the Family," was printed in May, 1909.

Mr. Maurice's comparison of Merrick to the late O. Henry recalls the fact that it was in AINSLEE'S that the latter's first stories were printed:

"In a general way one might sum up the present American audience of Leonard Merrick by saying that it is much like the present English audience of O. Henry. The impression that the stories of the late Sidney Porter have made on the English reading public as a whole is not a great one. British librarians are not overworked on account of the call for his books. But here

and there in London you will find a discriminating Englishman who has had a taste of O. Henry and who is hungry for more; who corners you if you are an American, in the hopes of extracting some new bit of information about the man and his work; who delights in retailing the yarns about Central America or Texas or 'Little Old Bagdad on the Subway'—sometimes the British mind achieves astonishing results with these tales—to all whom he can persuade to listen. Nothing could be much more dissimilar than the stories of Porter and Merrick, and yet in conversation you will constantly find the two names linked and their work compared. Unquestionably the American had by far the greater and more original talent. But there are times when the Englishman is the better artist. . . . Neither Porter nor Merrick has ever strained after condensation, and their work is the freer and more natural for that reason. Both have achieved much, and of both it may be said that the recognition accorded them may eventually be wider, but can never be more sincere."

The first of these new Leonard Merrick stories, "Why Billy Went Back," while not one of his stronger pieces of work, possesses the delicate humor and sureness of touch that has brought Mr. Merrick such wide recognition. You will find it in AINSLEE'S for November.



AMONG the ten or a dozen other short stories that go to make this coming number a notable one are: "Bill Heenan, Brute," in our opinion the most powerful and dramatic tale that William Slavens McNutt has yet given us in his Alaskan series; "Hucksterin' for Yours, Grogan!" a really humorous yarn by Reginald Wright Kauffman, author of "The House of Bondage"; "For Art's Sake," a thrilling sea tale, by John Fleming Wilson, in which a wireless operator, recognizing the art of motherhood as greater than his own, makes the supreme sacrifice; and characteristic stories by Anna Alice Chapin, Owen Oliver, and others equally well known to you.



Sermons on ideal heating

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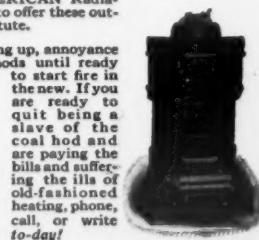
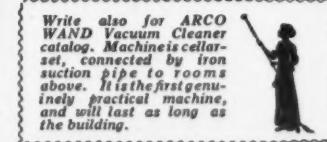


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TIFFANY S STUDIO



Suggestion for Dining Room

THE Tiffany Studios have recently issued a book entitled "Character and Individuality in Decorations and Furnishings." This gives a brief history of the development of artistic interior work, and contains a number of views of the Studios as well as many interesting suggestions for artistic decorative and lighting schemes, illustrating the comprehensiveness of Tiffany service.

One of the illustrations in this book is shown above, a copy of which will be sent to those interested upon request.

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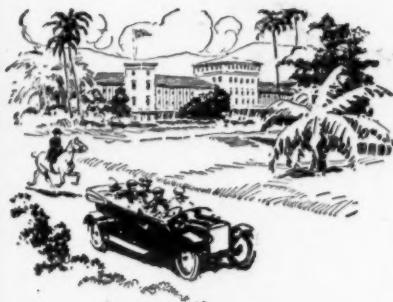
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(276)

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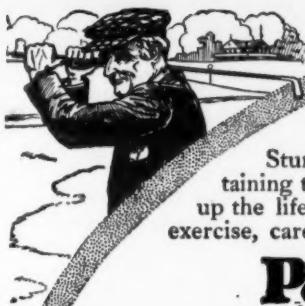
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